THUMBCAP WEIR

by FRANCES GILLMOR

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Helen Grace MacDonald Ph.D.

With every good wish
to Miss Macdonald,
and the sincere hope
that as a Canadian
she will enjoy this story
of my own loved corner
of Canada—

Frances Gillmor.

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FRANCES GILLMOR

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THUMBCAP WEIR

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THUMBCAP WEIR

I

THE Wolves lie long and low and black to the eastward, the last outposts of the islands of the Passamaquoddy before the long rollers of the Bay of Fundy begin.

There is East Wolf, low and dark on the skyline. There is Spur Wolf lifting its rocky profile majestically through the blur of the fog. There is Flat Wolf shoving its ledges through the surf. And at the end of the straggling line there is Southern Wolf, the largest of them all.

On clear days the lighthouse on Southern Wolf is visible from the islands of the Passamaquoddy to the westward. And when the fog crawls in from the Fundy the foghorn on Southern Wolf sounds its monotonous rhythm hour by hour.

It forms an undertone to life in the little fishing settlements on Campobello and Grand Manan. They hear it in the group of weathered gray houses on Deer Island. And on all the smaller islands of the bay with their lonely fishermen's camps the moan

of the foghorn accompanies the weary wait from tide to tide for herring.

Westward toward the Bocabec Hills the voice of the foghorn grows fainter, until, far up the rivers that cut back through miles of sheer gray cliffs to fresh water it is lost in the stillness of the fir woods.

But on the farms up river, sweet with the scent of clover and new mown hay, and in the granite quarries of the Bocabec Hills, the crawling bank of fog means little enough. It is only on the islands of the Passamaquoddy that men watch the sky, and the bay, and the far gray fog coming in from the Fundy—only there that the rhythm of the foghorn is the rhythm of life.

The people of the little gray islands have dwelt in lonely camps these many years. Nicholas Sabattis, one of the last of the Passamaquoddy Indians —the tribe that owned all the islands before the white man came—can remember the days when white children would run in terror from the Indians, and can tell of the nearer years when smoke rose from many villages on the Passamaquoddy islands and the bay was dotted with tall ships bringing sugar and molasses and rum from the West Indies and taking back dried hake and porpoise oil from New Brunswick traders. But, though still

in the fall of the year he goes porpoise hunting on the bay, Nicholas Sabattis is old and the days of which he tells are long since gone. When old men of the islands were boys, Nicholas Sabattis was old. Now, though his back is straight and his eyes keen, he is weary from the memories of a hundred years or more. And when he goes on his last long hunt, the memory of those days of tall ships from the Indies and the vessels which sailed out of the Passamaquoddy harbors in those far years will have passed with him.

The Indians will have gone, leaving only their names as imprints on that land of fir and granite and salt—Bocabac, Digdeguash, Pocalogan and Magaguadavic. The French explorers, who touched on the New Brunswick shore and named Letete, L'Etang and the St. Croix River, will have been forgotten. And though the sons of the English and Scottish settlers who cleared their farms from the towering trees of the first growth at Caithness and Mascarene and Scotch Settlement will pass on their names and memory, they, too, will fade, bit by bit, into the purple mists of the past.

The "Black Douglas" and all the other ships that sailed out of the harbors of the Passamaquoddy have gone down in distant seas or been left to rot on Passamaquoddy shores, and a young growth of fir

and spruce covers the shipyards in which they were built.

On Hardwood Island there is an old copper mine with water in its shaft. On the side of the mountain there is an island graveyard where some of the island people of the long ago lie sleeping: a grave here marked with a slate headstone; a grave yonder blanketed only with moss and white wood sorrel. These remain as mute witnesses of the proud day of the islands of the Passamaquoddy.

But still on these islands here and there under the brow of a mountain or close to the rockweed covered ledges there will be a fisherman's camp, where from early spring when the ice goes out until the fall run of herring when the ice comes in, two men will tend their weir from tide to tide.

Even the white weeks of winter bring little rest from their watch. For when the snow weighs down the boughs of the firs and lies in deep drifts at their roots, the weirmen go into the brittle silence of the woods and take out slim young firs and birch for rebuilding the weir in the spring.

When the ice goes out and the rivers run free and swift again to the bay these stakes and ribbons and brush are taken to the islands and ledges around the Passamaquoddy and driven down into the green tide.

In rain and sleet the weirmen work to have the weir complete before the spring run begins. Then waiting week on week they look for the herring to come in.

Alone on those grim fog-cloaked islands they wait. A hail now and then from the line fishermen on their way to the Race. Word from a vessel putting in from the open bay that the schools of herring have been seen. Then some dark night on the flood when there is no moon to send the shadows of the top brush shivering across the tide, the herring will come in.

Rowing out from their lonely camp under the mountain the two fishermen will set their drop net at the mouth of the weir. In the first gray hour of the day at low tide, they will return to seine, happy then if the blast of the conch shell horn brings the boats of the packers through the fog to bid for the catch, and the silver scales glinting on the surface of the water turn to silver coins to pay for food and clothing through the hard white winter that lies ahead.

So day after day until the maple leaves on the Bocabec Hills turn red and fall, the weir fishermen camp on the islands of the bay, alone save for a flock of sheep pastured there or a hail from the line fishermen out to set their trawls for cod and had-

dock. And through the quiet hours the foghorn blows and blows again in deep monotony.

On the Sabbath day the mouth of each weir is left open and the fishermen return again to their homes. One day of friendly talk around their kitchen stoves and at the door of the kirk, and again the smoke rises from the scattered camps on the islands of the Passamaquoddy.

But on many of the islands even the weir fishermen seldom set foot. There below the sheer-cut cliffs, below the sheep paths skirting the shoulder of the mountain, are pink starfish and groping barnacles in the salt rock pools. When the sun burns the fog away, there is only the flash of a redstart, or the gleaming flight of a yellow warbler above the stunted firs, only the sheep and the birds and the crawling sea things left from tide to tide, and the sound of the foghorn everlastingly.

II

GID WYN stood at the kitchen door, shading his eyes with his hand as he looked down the river. Across the cool wet pasture between the upper farmhouse and the beach came the tinkle of a cow bell.

"Middle Archie's black heifer has broken through the fence again. There she is coming up the beach!" he exclaimed.

"Ay, that breachy heifer should have a board on her face," Upper Archie replied. "I think that Middle Archie'll take it kindly if I speak to him about beefing her this fall."

"She's like to keep on up to the cove if no one turns her back," Gid said thoughtfully.

He came back into the kitchen. For a little while he did not speak, nor did Upper Archie, bending over the grub box on the table. Then Gid, with a glance about the room, began again.

"I'm thinking everything is done that needs doing," he said. "The fire's out, the water's emptied and the food's near packed."

The gray head above the grub box lifted. The

gray eyes twinkled as they watched the dark haired boy at the door.

"Ay, Gid lad. We're all ready now to start when the tide serves."

"We're getting a good start today. It's a full two hours yet to low water," Gid replied. He walked over to the door restlessly and looked across the pasture again. Then, "That heifer now—perhaps it would be a neighborly thing for me to turn her up the lane and drive her down the road past the clearing."

As he spoke he glanced questioningly at Upper Archie.

"There'll be time enough, I'm thinking," was the reply. "And time enough for you to keep on to the lower farm and say a word to Debbie, Gid lad, if you're wanting to."

Gid flushed, and stood watching the cow pick her way over the rocks to munch salt rockweed while the tide was out.

"Debbie did say last night at kirk that she had cooked some sweet cake for us Saturday," he said. "It'll be good for us to have this week at the island."

"It'll help out the hard tack and tea I'm packing, there's no doubt," was the kindly reply. "But you needn't be making the sweet cake your excuse, Gid. Why shouldn't you be wanting to see Debbie? It's

well I know you wouldn't go to the island for another week without seeing her."

"Yes, I'm wanting to see her," Gid admitted simply.

He still hesitated, looking over the wet pasture.

"It's been on my mind to ask you—" he began, and came to an awkward stop.

Upper Archie straightened and looked inquiringly at the frowning boy.

"When anything gets on your mind, it's the proper time to talk it over, Gid."

"It's this that's been troubling me, Uncle Archie. Now that I'm to marry Debbie in the spring, I'm wondering if you've told me all you know about my mother. It's a poor story as it is, and a poor thing that Debbie should be taking me, a boy from the work house. But I'm wondering if it's even worse than you've told me, Uncle Archie."

The gray Scotsman looked at the strained white face of the boy in the door.

"No, Gid lad," he said gently. "It's not a poor story at all. Is it a thing for shame that your mother came to the home of her own people to die, and found Mary McLaren to care for her at the end?"

"Mary MacLaren, who had the poor-house—It's not a proud place to die, Uncle Archie!"

"But you've no call to be ashamed of your

mother, Gid. I mind her well that night I met her down by the bridge. I can see her as she stood there, tired because she'd walked far with you in her arms. Her speech was the speech of one who'd had schooling, Gid. She asked me if the poorhouse was near, and if they'd take her in for the night, for she was weary with her journey and had no means to pay for other lodging."

"But you don't know where she came from, or why she'd come?" asked Gid.

"She said she'd come a long journey on the train, Gid, and then had walked over the Bocabec Hills. She'd come because she feared she had not long to live, and thought here she might be finding a home for you, since her husband was dead and there was none but herself to care for you."

"What did she say about that, Uncle Archie? Was she married to my father? I'd like well to know that, for Debbie's sake."

"Ay, Gid. She wore a gold wedding ring on her finger. But when I spoke of it she looked at it and said, 'My husband is dead.'

"While we were driving up to the poorhouse we talked little except to speak of the dry weather and the forest fires and the heat. For it had been a dry summer, and in the upper part of the province there were fires. But she did say this. She asked me

if I minded the Wyns who had lived here a long time ago.

" 'I've heard of them,' I told her. 'The old people spoke often of them. But they went to the States many years ago, and it's been long since I heard their name.'

" 'They were my mother's people,' she said. 'I've called the boy Gid Wyn that he might bear their name; and I knew no better place to come with him than here. For I thought that here he might be finding friends for their sake.'

"And here she did find friends, Gid, for Mary MacLaren at the poor-house nursed her until she died."

"I'd like to speak to Mary MacLaren that was kind to my mother!" Gid said in the little silence that followed.

"She died out west on the prairie ten years ago or more," Upper Archie told him gently. "She went away with her husband and children less than a year after your mother died. Up to the time she went she cared for you as if you were her own. But she told me before she went that with the little money they had to take them so far, and not knowing how long it would have to last them out in Saskatchewan, it was more than she could do to take you with them.

"When the new people took over the poor-house,

I feared they would not be good to you, wee toddling thing that you were. So I brought you to the upper farm."

A grasshopper whirred past them. The cow had left the beach and was browsing at the lower end of the pasture.

"There were many to tell me then that it was a mother you needed, and I had no mother to give you. What would I be doing with a wife? But Gid lad, you've been like my own son, like a MacQuarrie born, and poor care as I've been able to give you, and you needing it sore, it was a fine day for me when I brought you from the poor-house to the upper farm."

"And it's both a father and mother you've been to me," Gid said simply, "when my father and mother were dead."

Upper Archie went back into the kitchen and began again to pack the grub box. In a moment Gid came in.

"It's been on my mind, Gid," Upper Archie went on, "to tell you that I'm giving you the Thumbcap Weir the day you're married to Debbie. You've been tending it with me for a long time now, and I'm thinking it's only fair that you should have it for your own. There'll be work enough for me here on the farm."

"The Thumbcap'll be a fine gift for us on our wedding day," said Gid, flushing with delight.

"Then you'd best hurry down to the lower farm if you're thinking of telling her," Upper Archie said.

"It's a lot I'm having to tell her this morning," replied Gid. "I'm feeling better now that you've told me about my mother. It's been troubling me in my mind for a long time."

He closed the door behind him and stepped out into the pale gold morning.

Whistling, he hurried with long strides down the hill, and slapping Middle Archie's black heifer with an alder switch he started her up the lane. He passed the gnarled apple trees, heavy with fruit. Then down the shadow-streaked road the cow plodded, starting little clouds of dust at each step and switching the flies away with her tail. Behind her the boy walked, still whistling.

He came at last to Angus's bridge and for a little time he stood looking down into the brown swirling brook below. He could see the water spiders jerking back and forth in a quiet pool at the side. He could see the silver cascades where the brook fell over boulders in its course. And as he stood on the bridge above, the cool rushing melody of the water rose about him, filling the day's great silence.

When Gid started on again, he saw that the cow had turned aside and was tearing away sweet mouthfuls of road-side clover. At the slap of his switch on her haunches she blundered back into the road and plodded along until they came to the alder-bordered lane of the middle farm. Gid let down the bars and turned into the tunnel of quivering shade.

He could hear the sound of voices and movement from the house and knew that Janet MacQuarrie and her boys were busy with the work of the new week. It would be Dugal in the house, he decided, for he could see Peter and Neil mowing in the lower field and he knew John and Donald would have left for their weir at Herring Cove. That accounted for all five sons of Middle Archie MacQuarrie and the stern woman with the tired eyes who was his wife.

Gid turned the heifer into her pasture and hurried on. The MacQuarrie boys drew nearer. Behind the clashing mowing machine the hay was falling in fragrant rows.

"Your heifer broke through the fence and came up the beach. She was like to have gone on to the cove if I'd not brought her back," he called to them.

"We're beefing her in the fall," Peter replied.

"It was kindly done in bringing her back," Neil added.

Gid crossed the pasture and plunged into the woods. The short cut to the lower farm would bring him more quickly to Debbie.

The keen odor of the firs was about him. The path, ribbed with projecting roots and slippery with brown spills, climbed a hill, came out for a moment high above the river and dipped again into the woods. A red squirrel chattered furiously, watching him with bright beady eyes. A flicker called harshly at a little distance and flew with a quick rush of orange and gray into the shadowy reaches of the woods.

The hackmatack shadows still were long across the grass when Gid came out on the lower farm, the last of three which had been carved out of the grant from George III to the first MacQuarrie who left the Highlands for the little fishing settlement on the Fundy. On the lower farm lived Lower Archie MacQuarrie with his only child, his daughter Debbie.

Gid heard the icy tinkle of the brook on the last farm before he came out of the woods. In a moment he leaped it by a stepping stone and came to the milk house in the alder shade.

From the open door a voice called merrily,

"Is it your whistle I'm hearing so late in the morning, Gid?"

The sound stopped abruptly. His dark eyes smiled at the girl churning in the milk house.

"It's not so late, Debbie. We go on the flood and the tide's not turned. Uncle Archie said he'd pick me up from the wharf—for I wanted to see you, Debbie."

"Then, Gid, you're just in time. For the butter's come and you can bring me some water cold from the spring."

As she passed him the buckets the long sunlight reached through the door and touched her coiled braids to red gold.

From the cold boiling spring beyond the alder clump Gid brought back the buckets full. He sat on the door sill watching the creamy curve of her arms as she plunged the yellow butter into the cold water.

He told her all that Upper Archie had told him of the woman who had walked over the Bocabec Hills to die in the poor-house. When he had ended, Debbie's gray eyes were full of tears.

"Oh, Gid lad," she said tenderly, "if only she could know—and perhaps she does know—that the man she talked with that night at Angus's bridge had cared for her boy after all." She paused. "And

Gid, I'd like well for her to know that I'll be taking good care of you too."

Gid laughed.

"I'm a man now," he said. "I'm the one to be taking care of you, Debbie. This morning Uncle Archie was telling me that on our wedding day he'll be giving the Thumbcap Weir to us. It ought to take care of us both."

They could hear the cool voice of the brook beyond the alders.

"Debbie, I've been thinking——"

"Yes, Gid lad?" encouraged Debbie.

"Debbie—could you be marrying me in the fall? It's a weary wait through the winter, the long winter, Debbie."

"It's a long time," agreed Debbie. "But Father will not have it for the fall, Gid. It would be a long winter indeed for him alone if I went with you to the upper farm in the fall."

"Even if the herring run late, Debbie? The Thumbcap stocked a fine lot in the late summer two years ago. Perhaps this year——"

His dark eyes were eager as he searched her quiet face.

"It's not the herring," she told him. "It's just that I've no liking to leave my father alone through the winter. I'm not ready to be married yet, laddie.

I'll fix up the room fine for the spring. I'll hook a new mat to stand on when we're married."

"I was just hoping, Debbie, hoping about the fall. It wouldn't do any hurt. . . ."

He was looking now at the row of shining milk pans behind her.

"It can't be in the fall, Gid, but I'll marry you in the spring."

She was slapping the chilled butter into the wooden thistle print. Her gray eyes smiled.

"That is, if you're still wanting me then."

"Wanting you!" He sprang to his feet, filling the doorway. "Wanting you, Debbie! It's the wonder to me every morning and every night that you'll have me at all. A boy from the poor-house——"

He choked and stumbled on.

"It's well I know that Aunt Janet thinks it's a poor thing for a MacQuarrie girl to be taking me —Your father, too, maybe, Debbie—and I'd not be blaming him. . ."

Debbie had dropped the print on the platter and was facing him in the doorway. A little breeze rustled the alders and swept the cool milk house.

She gripped his shoulders with tense fingers, lifted troubled gray eyes to his.

"Gid, my own dear lad, is it that which has been troubling you? There are other people than the

Highlanders and the MacQuarries, and people just as good, I'm thinking. I'm proud, proud, that I'm to be Gid Wyn's wife! Gid, look into my eyes."

Her fingers tightened on his shoulders.

"Look into my eyes, Gid, and know that I'm loving you now—and always, Gid—always—Look into my eyes and know that, Gid!"

His arm crept about her waist.

"I know that, Debbie," he said quietly.

A redstart somersaulted in the alders. A little wind stirred. Debbie turned back to her butter.

"I'll walk with you down to the wharf, Gid," she said, "and take my butter to the store. We'd best start now or you'll lose the tide."

With deft fingers she wrapped each chilled print of yellow butter in a green cabbage leaf and laid it in her basket.

"Take it, Gid, while I go to the house for my shoes and the sweet cake I'm giving you. But before we go, you'll have a drink of the buttermilk."

She plunged a long-handled dipper into the churn and brought it up dripping full. As Gid lifted it to his lips with its floating globules of golden butter, he watched her go barefooted across the dew-wet grass to the house.

She came out again carrying her shoes, and together they turned up the lane toward the road.

Debbie walked along the side of the road, bending the tall grass sideways with her foot and now and then avoiding a purple thistle. The long shadows lay webbed with dew.

"I'm saving my shoes," laughed Debbie. "They'll do me the winter through and in the spring I'll have some new ones to be married in. After all, it will not be long. We'll be going to the island then, won't we, Gid?"

"I keep thinking how you'll look there," he said hesitantly. "There's a maple near the camp and when it begins to turn with the frost, the leaves, Debbie—they look like your hair when the sun is on it."

The gray eyes smiled under the red gold braids.

"It's a beautiful thought, Gid, to be thinking of me."

They were in the woods now. The sun, still pale in the morning, cut gold swathes through the dark boughs and lightened the deep green moss below. Beside the road stood a roundwood tree, its bitter berries reddening for the fall.

"The apple blossoms will be in bloom when we're married, Gid," said Debbie. "We'll have a room full of them. And then you'll be taking me home to the island. The finest wedding journey of all, that will be."

They walked on along the road. The dust was soft beneath Debbie's bare feet.

"Debbie," Gid's dark eyes were troubled again. "Debbie, we'll be all alone on the island except for the sheep. I'm fearing you'll be lonely, perhaps."

"Will you be lonely, Gid lad, with me there with you?"

"You know that I couldn't be, Debbie."

"Then, Gid, you should know that it will be as sweet for me there. I'll not be lonely on the island with you—and the sheep."

A high thin whistle quivered from the underbrush.

"A white throat," she whispered. "The birds are singing-gay in the cool of the morning, aren't they? —as if all the world was glad for us, Gid!"

The road came to the first houses of Harbor By Chance, passed the kirk at the foot of the mountain and went on toward the settlement. Beside the kirk Debbie stopped. She wiped her feet on the grass, still cool and wet with dew, and sat on a lichen-encrusted boulder to pull on her shoes and stockings.

"For I'm too old to be going barefoot through the streets of Harbor By Chance," she said.

Then together she and Gid followed the road as it swung down into the little settlement between

the fir-covered hills and the bay, past the wharf with its flakes of drying hake, past the store kept by Middle Archie, and climbed the hill again.

She stopped at the store.

"I'll be seeing you next Sabbath, Gid," she said.

"Yes, Debbie. In the spring—I'll be taking you to the island with me."

He gave her the basket of butter and hurried down to the shore.

III

AFTER the flooding sunshine of the morning Middle Archie's store was dark and crowded. The light from the door and the small window dimly revealed pollock lines and fish hooks, hogsheads of Jamaica molasses, lead-lined chests of tea and bolts of calico. All the needs of Harbor By Chance were supplied by Middle Archie's store.

As Debbie laid down her basket on the counter, Middle Archie separated himself from the group of men in the rear.

"They've been asking for your butter, Debbie," he greeted her, "and saying every one of them that there's no butter in Harbor By Chance the like of Debbie MacQuarrie's."

He folded back the coarse linen cloth from the top of the basket and lifted out the cabbage leaves. The thistle stamped prints of butter lay on their green nests, yellow as the morning sunlight that crept over the door sill.

"What will you be exchanging it for the morning, Debbie?" Middle Archie inquired.

"I'm needing sugar, Uncle Archie, and tea and beans——"

As he weighed out the sugar, Debbie's eyes grew accustomed to the dimness. She saw distinctly now the red jovial face of Middle Archie. She saw the men at the back of the store: the black beard and glittering black eyes of old Tony Luti; the genial smile of Angus Duncan who lived down by the lighthouse; the broad shoulders of Jim Stone who had come recently to Harbor By Chance and was reputed not very religious since the Sabbath afternoon when he had taken in his hay because it looked like rain; and, seated on a barrel of hard tack, old Lish Penny, grizzled and bent, with eyes that seemed actually to protrude with the strain of many years of peering into the green tide for herring.

"It's little good the light does any of us coming through Letete," Lish Penny was saying bitterly, "when never a flash do we get of it until we're through."

Middle Archie chuckled.

"The government built it there for you, Angus, I'm thinking, to help you hunt cows in your pasture at night."

"It's a considerate act of the Liberal Government's," Angus Duncan replied with his slow

smile, "seeing I'm the only good Tory in Harbor By Chance."

"Grit or Tory, it's all the same, I'm thinking," old Lish put in. "It's little luck ever comes to the Passamaquoddy. I'm thinking there's a curse on the weirs. We've thought too long that we could take the fish of the sea for our own, the fish that belong to all men, each for his own food. We've been gambling with God for riches. And when you gamble with God, you lose. You get a curse, a curse . . . "

The old man shook his head dismally. Debbie remembered the many times she had heard him talk in the same strain, bitter and defeated after losing his own gamble with the tides and fogs of the Fundy.

Today the men at the back of the store humored him.

"Maybe it's to fulfil the curse on the weirman that the government put the lighthouse in such a place—so they'll go to the bottom in Letete," suggested Jim Stone.

"They'll not be the first that have sunk in Letete," Lish Penny replied. "Many a man's gone down there."

"Ay, he's speaking only the truth," Middle Archie agreed. "Letete's taken her share of the men of the islands."

"It's a part of the curse on the weirs," Lish Penny insisted. "I can remember when the islands used to ship fish and oil to the West Indies and the bay was full of sails. Now there's a few herring sold at Eastport, and a few hake sounds shipped away, and an old Indian goes porpoise hunting in the fall of the year. The islands are dying, dying . . ."

The old man bent over his cane and stamped out of the store.

Middle Archie passed Debbie's bundles across the counter and she packed them neatly in her basket.

"Lish brought in some dulse this morning, Debbie," he said. "No doubt you'd be liking a handful."

She helped herself from the box of the dried salt seaweed beside her.

Old Tony Luti, who had been silently listening at the back of the store, came forward now.

"I'll have a chew of that dulse, too, Archie MacQuarrie," he said.

His was an alien face among the stern Scottish countenances around him. Bearded and black and twisted with a certain scorn, it showed his distrust of the neighbors among whom his days were lived. And they left him out of their talk there in the dim-lighted store, spoke to him seldom in the same jesting tone they used among themselves.

"It's a queer streak that's in him, what with his foreign blood," they had commented often. "His mother that was from up river and a decent girl, so the old folks say, made a poor match for herself when she married that man from the canneries, that man who scarce could speak English at all, and it was an ill day when she brought Tony back to Harbor By Chance."

Nevertheless Middle Archie's voice was friendly as he answered him.

"Ay, Tony, it's good dulse and well dried."

The black-bearded man shoved a handful in his pocket and went out. Debbie, her basket over her arm, said good-bye to her uncle and followed him.

The harbor was full of fishing boats, some carrying the weir fishermen to their island camps for another week, some bearing the line fishermen on their way to the fishing grounds in the Race. Old Tony Luti stood outside the door chewing his dulse. Young Tony's vacant face peered above the drying hake sounds on the flakes as he waited for his father.

To Debbie's surprise she saw Upper Archie coming up from the wharf.

"I was thinking you and Gid were on your way to the island now, Uncle Archie," she said to him.

He smiled at the quiet-faced girl.

"We'd have been well on our way, Debbie lass, but Gid was so happy to be talking with you he was forgetting that we needed molasses from Middle Archie's store."

"He was telling me that you'll be giving us the Thumbcap Weir in the spring when we're married," Debbie said shyly. "It's a fine gift to be giving us, Uncle Archie."

"But it'll be a fine day for us all when you're married, Debbie. And Gid has fished the Thumbcap with me so long it's fair and right for me to be letting him have it in his own name now, I'm thinking. He's a good lad, Debbie, a good lad!"

At the name of the Thumbcap the black-bearded man at the door of the store looked up. His face was sullen.

"You'll give Gid Wyn the Thumbcap and the Thumbcap Weir, will you, Archie MacQuarrie?"

"Ay, Tony, in the spring when he and Debbie are married."

"Before you give the Thumbcap Weir away you'd better own it," came the snarling response.

Upper Archie looked around in faint surprise.

"There's no doubt that I own it, Tony. Who's to question that?"

"I'll question it quick enough, Archie MacQuarrie, if you go selling it."

Upper Archie frowned in gentle bewilderment at Tony's words.

"What's that you say, Tony?"

"I say," repeated Tony angrily, "when you get ready to give away the Thumbcap Weir, I'll question who owns her quick enough. She belonged to me before ever you built her or fished her, Archie MacQuarrie."

Upper Archie looked relieved.

"Ay, Tony. But it was long years ago, you mind. For three years you let the license go and the third year I took it up. I've the license from the Department of Marine and Fisheries, Tony."

"I had no money to build again after the weir went out with the ice that winter," old Tony said sullenly. "You knew I had no money. It was a trick you played on me. The weir's still mine by rights. Yes, and the Thumbcap, too. I camped on the island two years while I was tending the weir, Archie MacQuarrie, and I've writing to show that it's mine. A man made out a deed to me, and I've got it at home, written on a shingle. He sold the Thumbcap to me for five dollars. And with my own eyes I saw him make the writing on the shingle."

"But Tony, that doesn't make it yours. The Thumbcap's been owned by the MacQuarries al-

ways. It was in the grant to my grandfather when he first came from the Highlands."

"If the MacQuarries owned the island when I was camping on it, I guess they'd have said so quick enough," insisted Tony angrily.

"Where else would you camp, Tony? But camping on the Thumbcap doesn't make it yours, nor a deed from a man who never owned it. Who was that man?"

"It was a man at Peg's Hole. I don't know his name. But we had a drink together, and he wouldn't have been giving me a deed to what he never owned, Archie MacQuarrie."

"It must have been as a joke he was doing it, Tony. Or he may have been after your money. You paid him?"

"I paid my five dollars. And it'll be a black day for you when you cheat me out of the Thumbcap I bought with it, Archie MacQuarrie—or out of the weir that I was owning all along. I'll have what belongs to me."

"Tony," argued Upper Archie patiently, "for three years you didn't build the Thumbcap Weir. You were line fishing all that time with never a sign that you'd take the license up again even when you got the money to build. It was fair enough, I'm thinking, for me to take it up. You've not

been cheated out of the Thumbcap Weir, nor the Thumbcap itself!"

The black eyes above the black beard glared angrily at Upper Archie.

"Smooth talking'll not be enough, Archie MacQuarrie. I'll have my rights."

As Tony started down to the wharf, Debbie saw Gid Wyn coming up. Beside him walked her father, his white beard and stern face giving him a patriarchal dignity as he approached.

"Gid told me you were here, Upper Archie," he said. "I'd be having a word with you."

Upper Archie looked at his cousin in relief.

"It may be that you can tell Tony here that we've owned the Thumbcap always, Lower Archie," he said. "He's claiming it and the weir too, that's to be Gid's and Debbie's in the spring."

Lower Archie was a man of few words. He glanced at the sullen face of Tony Luti, who had paused on his way to the wharf.

"Middle Archie has the grant to the island in his safe," he said. "Now's the time to be settling the title."

Together they walked into the store. The pungent odor of tea and coffee met them as they stepped into the dark, crowded room. As Middle Archie greeted them, he was told of the dispute.

"Tony here is claiming the weir and the Thumbcap," Upper Archie explained. "If you've the grant handy, Middle Archie, we'd like to be seeing it, even if we miss the tide."

"The grant'll settle it quick enough," replied Middle Archie cheerfully. "You'll not be telling all Harbor By Chance that the land that's belonged to the MacQuarries three generations belongs to you, Tony."

He opened a small safe, half concealed in the shadows, and brought out a bundle of papers. Shuffling them quickly, he separated one and brought it to the light at the front of the store.

"Here's the grant," he repeated. "From George III to the MacQuarries it is—to Archibald MacQuarrie, my grandfather. What was granted to the MacQuarries, the MacQuarries still own."

Tony reached for some more dulse without replying, but he watched Middle Archie unfold the old yellowed parchment on the counter. Attached to the document by a tape lay the brown wax seal with the lion and the unicorn in relief on one side, and the ship carrying full sail on the other.

"It looks like a piece of hard tack, Uncle Archie," she said.

"It's the seal of George III, Debbie," replied Middle Archie solemnly.

Together the three Archies bent over the faded writing which had set forth the boundaries of the land granted to their grandfather: Upper Archie, gray and kindly; Middle Archie, with his red jolly face grown for the moment grave; Lower Archie, with his eyes stern above his white beard.

Upper Archie beckoned to Tony.

"Come here, Tony, and see for yourself that the Thumbcap's in the grant."

Tony approached reluctantly and watched Middle Archie patiently trace with his finger the old phrases of the grant.

"George the Third," Middle Archie read aloud, "By the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith &c. To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting. Know Ye that We, of our special grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, have given and granted, and We do by these presents for Us our Heirs and Successors, give and grant unto Archibald MacQuarrie and to each and every one of his heirs and assigns, five several lots or pieces and parcels of land situate, lying and being in Harbour By Chance, in the County of Charlotte in our Province of New Brunswick——"

He skimmed the description rapidly.

"Beginning at the water's edge on the North

Western side of Harbour By Chance at the easterly angle of lands reserved for a Glebe and school . . . West by the Magnet one hundred and twenty chains . . . following the various courses of the said harbour . . . being wilderness land. . . ."

"That," said Middle Archie, looking up, "is the description of the farms. When the crown surveyors ran the lines ten years ago, they said the grant stood in any dispute. There's the description. There's the map. Now we're getting to the islands, Tony."

Debbie and Gid on tiptoe at the edge of the group saw the faint lines of the map of the Passamaquoddy. Angus Duncan left his barrel of hard tack at the back of the store to put on his spectacles and peer over their shoulders.

"Also all that certain Island situate, lying and being in a cluster of Islands in the Parish of West Isles in the County of Charlotte in the Outer Bay of Passamaquoddy, commonly known as Deadman's Island, and containing fourteen acres more or less. Also a certain small Island known as the Thumbcap situate North from the said Deadman's Island, being originally a part of the said Island and now connected therewith at low Tide and containing one acre more or less."

The little group bent over the counter lost its air

of tension. The three Archies straightened. Angus Duncan took off his spectacles. They all looked at old Tony Luti.

"There's the Thumbcap, Tony. It's the grant of George III." Middle Archie tapped the yellowed parchment emphatically with his finger.

"You can have your writing from all the kings of England that ever was," old Tony muttered. "But there's no talk of the Thumbcap Weir there. You'll not deny that's mine."

"The weir privilege is only held from year to year, and you let yours go," said Upper Archie kindly. "When you think it over, Tony, you'll be understanding it better, and you'll be seeing your mistake."

He and the other Archies stood aside to let Tony pass. Still muttering angrily, he slouched out of the door.

Middle Archie folded the parchment with its heavy brown seal.

"The grant stands in law," he said to Upper Archie. "You've no cause to worry about that."

"If he gets working it over in his head, there's no telling what he'll do," put in Angus Duncan warningly.

"He'll see he's wrong when he thinks it over," Upper Archie replied quietly. "He's blind angry

now and won't give in. But we're like to hear no more about it."

"It was an ill day when Tony Luti came to Harbor By Chance from the canneries at Eastport," Lower Archie said sternly. "He's of foreign blood and a hot-headed man."

"It's not his fault, I'm thinking," was Upper Archie's mild rejoinder. "Young Tony is simple and I'm thinking old Tony himself has not much understanding. It was a heartless joke for a man to be playing on him, making him out a deed to the Thumbcap."

Lower Archie shook his head doubtfully.

"You're a peaceable man, Upper Archie, and I'm not saying it's not the Christian course to be taking. But you'll do well to see that old Tony Luti does no harm to you and Gid. He's made talk like this before."

With a word to Debbie, Lower Archie went out to join the other line fishermen on their way to the fishing grounds.

"Come, Gid," Upper Archie said. "We'll be getting across to the Island, or the weir'll not be seined on this tide, I'm thinking."

Debbie took her basket again and followed them outdoors. A few boats still dotted the channel out between the rockweed-covered ledges. The sun was

climbing higher above the settlement between the Bocabec Hills and the bay.

A slim girl coming down the hill waved to Debbie and called a greeting.

"I'm baiting trawl this afternoon, Debbie," she told her. Suddenly interrupting herself, she pointed down the road by the wharf. "See!" she exclaimed. "The boys are teasing poor Tony Luti again. It's a cruel thing for them to be doing."

Against the blue sky a white kite was sailing. A grinning boy ran with the string.

"Run, Tony," he cried tauntingly. "It's the devil coming after you!"

The tall loose-jointed boy looked at the kite in terror. Quick tears started in his vacant eyes. He wiped them away with his sleeve and hurried down the wharf.

"Hurry, Tony!" the boys hooted. "Get you to the boat. The devil can't swim."

"Pa," he screamed and scrambled down the slimy ladder. When he reached the boat, old Tony let go the painter and swung into the channel. His ugly curses came clearly across the water as he headed with the other line fishermen for the fishing grounds.

Debbie took the road for home. She met Lish Penny trudging along with his cane.

"It's a fine morning we're having," she greeted him.

"A weather breeder, it is," he replied gloomily. "There was a sun-dog this morning and there'll be rain before night."

She laughed merrily and went on. Across the pastures cloud shadows were marching, rank on rank. She stopped at the kirk and removed her shoes and stockings; then, barefoot, took the road into the woods.

IV

A FOG mull hung over the Passamaquoddy as Gid Wyn climbed up from the camp under the mountain on Deadman's Island, up the path slippery with fir spills, up past the cool spring, until he came out of the dimness of the firs and stood on the bare rock of the mountain top.

Around him orange milkweed flared in the crannies of the rock. A roundwood tree lifted its bunches of scarlet berries below him, and not far away the light green of the birches quivered.

The red disk of the sun burned through the fog, as he stopped for a few minutes on the mountain top before starting down to the steep cliffs on the east side of the island. There the long rollers from the Fundy were breaking with a roar over the outside ledges, and in the cove the driftwood would be piled high ready for burning in the little gray camp on the other side of the island. After he had located it, Gid planned to bring his boat around through the ledges and take a load back with him.

As he lay on the rock, his cap pulled down over his eyes to shield them from the sun, he heard the cracking of twigs and a movement in the underbrush.

"The sheep will be coming back from the Thumbcap," he decided. "Already the tide must be out far enough for them to cross on the ledges."

But as he rose to go down the mountainside, he saw a man walking slowly over the bare rock and stopping at intervals to look carefully at the rock at his feet. Gid recognized him even at a distance. It was old Tony Luti.

"Hello there, Tony!" he hailed him. "Do you think you're tracking pollock? It'd take a flying fish to get this high!"

Tony looked up.

"It's men I'm tracking, Gid Wyn," he replied. "The boys were telling young Tony that Columbus came to this country first. They were singing a song to him. . . . But I take no stock in what they say, Gid. And I was telling the boy to pay no attention to them at all. For with my own eyes I'd seen the date up here carved in the rock—thirteen eighty-five. That's earlier than what they said, isn't it, Gid?"

The black-bearded man looked at him questioningly. Gid nodded his agreement.

"It'd be earlier than Columbus, right enough," he said. "But I'm thinking you've made a mistake, Tony. There'd be no date so early carved on the rock on Deadman's Island."

"I saw it with my own eyes," insisted Tony, still scanning the gray surface of sandstone. "And what you see with your own eyes is better than what you learn from the writing in books."

He walked on slowly, now and then dropping on his knees to scrape clean a carved initial or date left by fishermen of other days on the height of Deadman's Island.

"Why, Gid, they were even telling my boy the world was round, those boys at Harbor By Chance. Round like an apple. When you can see with your own eyes that it's flat." He lifted his eyes to the distances of the bay. "When the fog lifts you can see with your own eyes that it's flat," he repeated earnestly.

Gid looked out over the Fundy. But still the fog hung low.

"It looks flat," he agreed. "Though I've been hearing too that it's round after all."

"Round like an apple!" Tony grunted. "It's the writing in books that says so. But there's no man around the islands but would know better than that. I'm telling Tony not to believe all people tell

him from the writing in books. There's many a lie in the writing, Gid."

Tony shot a quick look at the boy beside him. "Lies!" he repeated. "Like the lies ye have in your writing from the king. I was near forgetting the lies you and the Archies were reading me. But it's the writing on the shingle tells the truth, Gid Wyn. I saw the man that made the letters, saw him with my own eyes. And he was telling me it was a deed to the Thumbcap. It's the writing on the shingle that's true."

Tony pulled at his beard excitedly as he talked. Gid watched him with a troubled face. Then he plunged his hands in his pocket and started to turn away.

"It's the writing on the grant that'll stand in law, Tony," he told him. "But it's little use to be arguing here. See! The fog's lifting. And yonder's a sardine boat. She's hugging the island pretty close."

But Tony had forgotten the shingle and the Thumbcap once more.

"Here, Gid!" he cried. "Here's the date that's older than the schoolbooks say."

He was on his knees, tracing with his finger the dim figures.

"One, three, eight, five. Isn't that right, Gid?"

Gid dropped down beside him. His finger too traced the withered lines.

"It's not so far back as that, Tony," he said. "See how it's worn away. And it's half of an eight that's looking like a three, I'm thinking. It's eighteen eighty-five."

Tony looked at him scornfully.

"You'll not believe what you see with your own eyes, Gid. You're like the rest of your people. The Scotch are stubborn, the lot of them. And I'll be sitting on a Sunday evening when you're all going by to kirk, and say to little Tony and Ma time and time again, the Scotch are stubborn. And there's no music in them, these people of Harbor By Chance—no music or dancing in them at all!"

Gid was standing now looking out again over the bay. Close under the mountain he could see the Thumbcap, and the rockweed-covered ledges stretching across to the Thumbcap.

"I'll be going on down to the shore," he said. "There's little time left to be hunting driftwood before I'll have to be seining the weir. It's half ebb already. The sheep are coming back across the ledges from the Thumbcap."

He started down the mountainside toward the grove of birches.

"Good luck with your dates, Tony," he said.

"You'll be finding there was someone here in three eighty-five if you look long enough."

But Tony, having found the carved record he was looking for, looked no further. He started down the mountain beside Gid.

"Across from the Thumbcap, you say? I'll have none of your sheep on the Thumbcap. It's mine, by the writing on the shingle."

Once more Gid's attention had wandered.

"That sardine boat's close in. It's the boat Robert Duncan's running for the Eastport factory, isn't it, Tony? But you'd think Robert Duncan would be knowing better than to head in so close to the ledges."

They had left the bald mountain top and for a little while the woods shut out the sight of the sardine boat. Then they came out on the cliff. Tony's motor boat was hauled up on the narrow rocky beach at its foot.

"You'd best be careful yourself," warned Gid. "It's only at high tide that it's easy to get through those ledges, as you're knowing yourself."

"It's not a good place to land," Tony replied gruffly. "But I was thinking Upper Archie'd not let me land from the harbor, what with the trouble between us. And I wanted to see the writing on the rocks."

"Robert Duncan's crazy or drunk, that's certain," Gid exclaimed, looking again out over the rockweed-covered ledges. Between them the tide swirled, and over them an occasional roller crashed, seeming to lift them and drop them again. Out beyond the ledges, the sardine boat was laboring against the tide, and the ledges waited, like living things.

Tony was letting loose his painter, and had already bent to shove off when Gid gave a sudden shout.

"He's piled up on the ledges!"

They stood there watching in horror-stricken silence the swift succession of events that followed: the sudden list to starboard, the downward arc of the masts dipping toward the tide, and the dark figure of a man flung into the swirling water between the ledges.

Gid leaped toward Tony's boat, putting his shoulder to its weight as he shoved off. There was the slow drag of the keel on the gravel and then it floated free. Gid, in a moment, was bending over the engine. He felt his arm gripped, and Tony Luti's bearded face looked into his.

"Gid, what is it that you're doing? You're not after him?"

Gid shook his arm free.

"There's little time to be talking," he said briefly. "Take the tiller for a minute."

As he spoke the engine started. Once more Tony gripped his arm.

"You'd not go after him, Gid! Your turn'll be next if you do. Everyone knows the man who takes another from the sea will be the next to go.

Once more Gid shook himself free. His hand found the tiller and swung the bow of the boat toward the capsized sloop.

"That's the talk of fools. We'll get Robert Duncan out of this or drown right now!"

Tony's face was twisted with fear.

"You'll not get me out there in the ledges, Gid Wyn. You'll not get me out there. It's a trick, a MacQuarrie trick, to drown me. As sure as we pull Robert Duncan out we'll drown. It may be years from now. But we'll be the sea's men, Gid Wyn, marked for its taking."

Gid's eyes were on the figure struggling between the ledges. He cast a quick glance of scorn at Tony.

"Swim back if you're afraid," he told him.

Tony looked at the increasing space of green water between them and the cliff of Deadman's Island. His voice shook as he turned again to Gid.

"You know I can't swim, Gid. I can't go back. And I'll be drowned if I go on. It's a trick of

yours. It's a trick to drown me. You'd murder me, Gid Wyn. . . ."

His voice rose high-pitched and shrill, like the voice of young Tony tormented by the children of Harbor By Chance. The same glazed look of terror was in his eyes.

"Steady, Robert," shouted Gid across the water, as he nosed out between the ledges. "Steady there, and we'll get you out."

Tony looked frantically at the cliff of the island. Then he leaped for the engine.

"You'll not take me out there. You'll not even take my boat out there, Gid Wyn," he screamed.

Gid reached for his collar and pulled him back, then threw him roughly back over a thwart.

"Tony Luti, you'll not keep me back, when Robert Duncan is drowning out yonder. If you touch a hand to that engine except as I tell you to, you'll go overboard as sure as you're alive this minute. You'd let a man drown, for a superstition of fools. You'd watch him go down, for an old tale you've heard."

Gid's face was dark with scorn as once more he headed the boat toward the struggling man.

"It's just what everyone knows, Gid," whined Tony. "You've heard it yourself from all the men of the islands, that whoever saves a man from

drowning is the sea's man and the next to drown. You know it yourself, Gid."

But the threat of being thrown overboard then and there held Tony's hand back from the engine until, at a brief order from the boy, he stopped it and seized the oars. Closer to the struggling man in the tide between the ledges they drew.

"We'll go on the ledges ourselves, Gid," moaned Tony.

But in the bow of the boat Gid was leaning far out, reaching toward the churning circle around Robert Duncan.

Tony's face lightened with a new thought. He seized an oar and raising it above his head as a weapon he crept up behind Gid.

"It's all right, Robert," Gid was shouting. "We're here. . . ."

Just as he spoke the exhausted man went under once more. Gid with one hand on the painter slipped over the gunwale after him. And Tony's oar descended with a crash on the place where a moment before Gid had been.

Still white with fear he jumped back to start the engine. Gid, holding fast to the painter with one hand, had caught Robert Duncan with the other and was holding his head above water.

"Tony," he shouted. "Give a hand here!"

The engine started and the rope tugged in his hand as the boat drew away. Gid held it firmly as he and Robert were dragged through the churning water. They were swung alongside and carried on as the boat gathered speed.

"Tony!" shouted Gid again. "A hand here to haul us aboard!"

Tony, his hand on the tiller, could see the two boys in the water. Resolutely he turned his eyes away and headed for the open bay.

The rope cut Gid's hand as he held on. Robert, unconscious, hung to his other hand. He began to understand Tony's purpose.

"Tony Luti," he shouted, "the ghost of me'll haunt you to your dying day, if you don't haul us aboard. . . . The devil 'll get you and young Tony too. . . ."

Tony heard this appeal to his superstition unmoved. Resolutely his eyes stayed fixed on the fog ahead. And Gid still clung to the taut rope, and still held Robert's head above the wash of the green tide.

Again Tony's face lighted with a plan of action. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a knife, a long sharp knife unlike those carried by the men of the islands.

A swift step carried him to the bow of the boat,

and he held the knife poised for a moment over the rope. From the churning water, Gid looked at him mutely, and waited. Tony looked at him hanging there.

"Gid," he pleaded, "I've never killed a man. It's only to save my own life I'd do it. But, Gid, I'm the sea's man if I haul Robert Duncan aboard. Let go of him, and I'll give you a hand over the gunwale."

Gid answered not a word, but the grip on Robert's collar did not loosen.

"Let go of him, Gid, and I'll pull you in. But if you hang on, I'll cut the rope. I'll cut the rope, Gid. I'll not be seeing you there alongside, still hanging on. I'll not be seeing your face a-haunting me when you die."

"My ghost'll haunt you in the night, Tony Luti," repeated Gid desperately. "I'll give you never a moment of rest till you drown yourself in the sea. You'll be the sea's man for sure if you cut that rope."

The terror-stricken man stayed his hand for a moment more. Trembling he watched Gid hanging doggedly to the rope. Gid changed his tone.

"Stop that engine, Tony!" he commanded sharply.

Moving slowly as if he were dazed, Tony obeyed.

The engine sputtered and died.

"Now grab Robert under the arms like that and haul him over the gunwale."

Trembling, he obeyed once more. Gid waited until Robert's inert body tumbled between the thwarts. Then he climbed aboard himself.

Tony was crouched by the engine. Tears of fright were on his cheeks. His hands were clenched in terror.

"Now I'll be drowned for sure, Gid Wyn. You've drowned me. You've murdered me for the Thumbcap. I'll have to go home now and tell Ma and Liz and the boy that I'm to be drowned, tomorrow, or next week maybe. . . . I'm the sea's man now. . . ."

"Start that engine and take the tiller," came Gid's abrupt order.

"I'm as much as dead this minute . . . a week, or maybe a month. . . ." The words came brokenly as he bent to the engine.

"Head her around the ledges and into the harbor below the camp," ordered Gid.

He had laid Robert Duncan over the thwart and was working to bring breath back again to the limp form.

Around the end of Deadman's Island into the still waters of the harbor the black boat chugged.

Past the seine reel in the harbor to the pebbled beach below the camp.

They had lifted Robert out and laid him on the ground by the time Upper Archie hurried down from the camp. He took in the situation quickly and bent over the unconscious boy. For a moment the three were silent. Then Upper Archie straightened.

"He's coming back," he said with relief.

Tony was turning to his boat again when Robert opened his eyes. "I gave out before you got to me," he whispered.

"You'll haul on a seine many a day. You were too good a man for the bay to get," Upper Archie told him cheerfully.

The strain of the last half hour had snapped Gid's temper at last.

"You must have been crazy or drunk to pile your boat up on those ledges, Robert Duncan," he said. "You've been around the islands long enough to know how the tide runs back of Deadman's Island. And if you've no more sense than to steer a course like that——"

Upper Archie stayed him with a gesture.

"I had been having a drop," admitted Robert. "It was a fool thing to do. And it's a heart full of gratitude I'll be having always to you, Gid. I saw

Tony lift his oar to strike you before you got to me . . . and I know it's to you I owe it that I'm living now."

Tony, bending over his engine, straightened.

"But, Robert, you needn't forget that I'll be drowned for this day's work, drowned in the bay as sure as you're living now. I'm the sea's man. . ." There was hopelessness in his voice and the stoop of his shoulders. Once more he bent to his engine. His boat moved away from the little group on the beach.

"And, Gid," he called, "I'll not be forgetting that you've murdered me this day, drowned me for the Thumbcap Weir. . . ."

The words came shrill and bitter across the water. But on the beach Gid and Upper Archie were helping Robert toward the camp under the mountain.

V

THE slow gold days of late summer crept over the islands of the Passamaquoddy: mornings of lifting fog when the Wolves and Grand Manan floated in soft enchantment between the bay and the sky; noons of crowding silence when the sun swung high; opal twilights when the sun went down behind the Bocabec Hills and the bay was filled with line fishermen on their way home to Harbor By Chance; black nights when the herring struck in from the Fundy; foggy dawns when the gulls screamed over the weirs at the seining.

Day after day as the summer waned, Gid Wyn and Upper Archie tended the Thumbcap Weir from their camp under the mountain.

"It'll be a good year for us yet, Gid lad," said Upper Archie after a big catch. "A good year if only this school of herring will stay in shore till the next run of tides."

The boats from the canning factories bidding for the catch brought word of the river weirs. Up the Magaguadavic and the Letang and in all the coves and ledges of the Passamaquoddy, schools of silver herring were filling the weirs.

The fishermen at Harbor By Chance, gathering at the kirk on the Sabbath, rejoiced at the luck of the late season. Only old Lish Penny shook his head forebodingly.

"It's not many tides that bring the herring," he declared. "A little luck when they run, and you're rich. A long cold winter, and your flour barrel's empty."

But while the roundwood berries turned red and the cliff swallows gathered for their southward flight, the run of herring continued. Gid Wyn and Upper Archie saw the Thumbcap Weir fill with darting silver even in broad daylight.

When the tides came on again, they stood at the door of their camp under the mountain and heard the hissing schools sweep by them through the dark water. Daybreak again would find the Thumbcap full.

Night and fog. Under the mountain the island camp was still. The foghorn blew and blew again from the Wolves in deep monotony.

Upper Archie rolled out of his bunk.

"Low tide, Gid," he said. "And a wet morning for seining, I'm thinking."

In the upper bunk Gid sat up. With his legs over the side he watched the match flicker as Upper

Archie lighted the kerosene lamp on the table and replaced the chimney.

"It was a black night last night when I put the drop on the weir," he said sleepily.

He jumped to the floor and dressed quickly. Then crossing to the door, he opened it and looked out. The chill air of early morning swept into the camp. The fog horn sounded again from the Wolves.

"Damp and foggy," he said, and stepped outside.

He splashed cold water over his face from a bucket near the door. Then picking up a few sticks of driftwood, he came back into the lamp-lighted camp.

"We're needing more driftwood, aren't we, Gid?" Upper Archie inquired. "I mind it was getting low last night."

"I noticed enough on the Thumbcap to be doing us a good while," Gid replied. "I'll row across and get some of it when the fog lifts."

He shoved the sticks of driftwood into the stove, poured a thin stream of kerosene over them, and heard the fire roar up the stove pipe. Upper Archie was laying the tin cups and plates on the table.

"If you'll be putting the water on to boil for the tea, Gid," he said, "I'll have a bite ready in two shakes of a lamb's tail."

In a moment the hard tack and molasses were on the table and the tea was poured out of the earthen pot into the tin cups.

"A bit of Debbie's sweet cake too," Upper Archie smiled, and set it down beside the kerosene lamp.

They ate their meal hastily and in silence. But before they had swallowed the last drop of tea and the last crumb of Debbie's sweet cake, the gray light of day was creeping into the camp, paling the circle of yellow lamplight and lying bleakly on the bunks, the rusty stove and the pile of lines and seine corks in the corner. Through the window they could see only the gray curtain of fog.

Upper Archie sat on the edge of his bunk and pulled on his hip boots.

"It's a bad morning, Gid," he said. "If the sardine boats don't make the harbor, we'll have to leave the drop on the weir and miss the next tide."

He blew out the lamp and together they went out into the leaden morning.

They walked over the short stretch of turf between the camp and the rocky beach. Clipped by the sheep which were pastured on the island throughout the year, the grass grew thick and green as a well kept lawn.

Then abruptly the ground beneath their feet

changed to gravel, and from gravel to rockweed. Gid found the painter of their dinghy and loosening it from the rock to which it was tied, he and Upper Archie shoved off.

The creak of their oars in the thole-pins and the gentle slap of the tide against the sides of the dinghy were the only sounds they made as they rowed in a world of fog and silence.

At the mooring they took their net boat in tow. A moment later the great floating seine rack loomed above them in the fog.

"Were there many herring in the weir last night when you were putting the drop on, Gid?" Upper Archie asked as they unwound the seine and let it fall in dark folds into the net boat.

"About fifteen hogsheads, I'm thinking," Gid estimated.

They rowed across the harbor and into the great fenced area of shallow water which was the Thumbcap Weir. The top brush waved slightly above the fence of heavy timbers driven into the green tide.

Upper Archie dug his oar deep into the water.

"Ay, Gid," he agreed. "Near fifteen hogsheads right enough."

He reached under the coiled painter in the bow and passed Gid a conch shell horn.

"Blow, lad," he said. "Blow for the sardine boats."

Gid took a deep breath and put the conch shell to his mouth. Once, twice, the call sounded through the fog.

Then in silence they let the seine down into the green tide.

Outside the harbor they heard the engine of the sardine boat from the canning factory approach and stop. A moment later the sloop-rigged craft glided out of the fog to the mouth of the weir.

"How are they running in the Thumbcap?" came the hail.

"Near fifteen hogsheads, Jim. I was fearing you wouldn't make the harbor and we'd have to leave the drop on."

In the green water the herring darted in silver streaks. Tighter drew the seine. They were jumping clear of the water now in frantic leaps. With a wet thud a herring fell into the dinghy.

Upper Archie picked it up and quickly slipped it back into the water outside the cork floaters of the seine.

"It leaped so high for its life it would be a pity not to let it go free," he said to Gid with a hesitant smile.

They pulled again on the seine.

"What's the news from the factories, Jim?" called Gid.

"The prices are dropping," the boatman replied. "With herring in all the weirs from Grand Manan to Harbor By Chance they can't hold up."

Gleaming cascades of herring were being poured out of the dipnets into the dinghy and the net boat. Gid and Upper Archie stood knee deep in the mass of lashing silver.

"You've heard that Robert Duncan's lost his job for running his boat on the ledges?"

Upper Archie looked up in quick concern.

"I hadn't been hearing that," he said. "That'll be a sore disappointment for his family; they have such pride in young Robert."

When the herring reached the gunwales they sculled over to the mouth of the weir and the waiting sardine boat. Tub by tub they passed the herring up to be salted and thrown into the hold. From each tub a herring was taken and so the tally kept of the day's catch.

The boatman spoke again as they counted the total.

"They're talking among the islands of the way you saved Robert from drowning, Gid. It was a brave thing to be doing . . . and Robert says that Tony Luti was giving you little help, though, as

Robert says, it was Tony's boat that brought him ashore and he'll give him credit for that."

"Without Tony and his boat he'd have gone down," agreed Upper Archie cheerfully.

Gid made no comment as he jumped down to the net boat.

The sardine boat glided away and Gid and Upper Archie rowed back to the seine rack in the harbor. Behind them in the Thumbcap Weir uncounted silver scales floated on the tide and flashed in rainbow light.

The stillness which had hung like the fog over the bay and the islands was now broken by the chugging of invisible boats on their way to the fishing grounds. An occasional hail floated through the fog as one trawler called to another in the gray morning.

Gid and Upper Archie wound the dripping seine on its rack and rowed ashore.

"The fog's lifting a bit, I'm thinking," Gid said, peering across the harbor. "I can see the sheep coming back across the ledges. They must have gone over to the Thumbcap yesterday at low water."

"It's a small flock to be coming across," Upper Archie commented. "Usually they keep together, but no doubt the others crossed just ahead and are half way up the mountain now."

Their keel scraped on the beach.

"A good catch, Gid, for one tide," Upper Archie said as they made the painter fast. "A good catch to make the winter easy."

When they reached the camp, Gid picked up the kettle from the back of the stove.

"I'll be getting water from the spring," he said to Upper Archie. "As soon as the fog lifts a bit more I'll row across and get the driftwood."

"There's no great hurry," Upper Archie replied. "But it's best to get it today instead of putting it off over the Sabbath."

Gid walked across the stretch of cropped turf and took the path up the mountain. The woods around him were filled with morning bird calls. Over his head a warbler fluttered in the green branches of a fir tree.

As he climbed the steep slope to the spring, the flock of sheep came suddenly around the shoulder of the mountain. They watched him for a breathless moment. Then as he approached with his swinging pail they fled timidly into the deeper woods.

From a joint in the rock half way up the mountain the water trickled into a little moss-encircled pool. Gid dipped his pail and started down again.

When he reached the camp Upper Archie had put the last sticks of driftwood into the stove.

"I'll have the dishes washed when you get back from the Thumbcap, Gid," he greeted him.

Gid left his kettle of water on the back of the stove and hurried down the beach. The sun hung swollen and red in the east. Though the foghorn still sounded in steady tones, the fog had thinned so that he could see the bluebells and orange milkweed clinging to the rocky face of the mountain.

With long rhythmic strokes he rowed out into the harbor.

Upper Archie was fumbling with hot water and dishes when he heard Gid's step at the door.

"There's been——"

Gid stopped, his voice shaking with anger. Then he began again:

"There's a black deed been done in the fog and the dark last night, Uncle Archie."

Upper Archie looked up and saw Gid's face white and strained. Unquestioning, he followed him to the dinghy and Gid again rowed silently across to the Thumbcap.

He led Upper Archie up the beach, across the smooth-cropped turf, and past a clump of stunted firs.

Then of a sudden the grass dipped into a sheltered hollow where the blue flag still bloomed in a pool of singing color.

There in the hollow of the Thumbcap three sheep lay with their throats cut—dead.

The gray Scotsman knelt beside them, grieving.

"Their throats cut this black night, Gid," he groaned. "It was a black-hearted scoundrel that did the deed."

"It's old Tony Luti's dirty work," replied Gid bitterly.

"There's no way of telling, Gid, but there's no man beside who'd be my enemy to do a thing like this, I'm thinking,—no man but Tony that'd be cutting the throats of the sheep and leaving them to die in the dark and the fog."

"Tony Luti's deviltry," repeated Gid. "He killed them when they crossed the ledges."

His face was set in anger as he walked away. He looked out over the ledges, stretching between the Thumbcap and Deadman's Island. Over the ledges the sheep had come, picking their way with sure steps on the slippery rockweed. Over the ledges the sheep had come to their death.

Gid tramped his way around the Thumbcap quickly. He pushed aside a clump of stunted firs. He peered into the crevices of rock along the shore. At last he climbed the barren knoll at the west end of the island.

"Here are two more dead," he called.

Upper Archie left the grassy hollow and climbed up beside Gid. He saw the bodies of the sheep lying on the jagged rocks below.

Together they went down and stood beside them. The flies, already clustered on the open wounds, rose buzzing and settled again.

"The dog!" muttered Gid.

"It's a poor dog that will kill a sheep. And even a dog would be mad for the taste of blood. But for a man——"

The gentleness of Upper Archie's eyes was gone. Bitter as the face of the boy beside him was his own.

"We'll bury them, Gid lad. They've been long dying."

"We've no shovel nor spade at the camp," Gid reminded him.

"Ay, Gid, I had forgotten. Then this afternoon we'll be dropping them into the bay back of the island. For the wind's come off shore and the ebb tide'll carry them into the Fundy and out to sea."

Together they walked back toward the dinghy on the beach.

"Don't be grieving, Gid—though it's well I know what you're feeling."

The gray old man with the gentle eyes stopped beside the sheep.

"It was soon after the MacQuarries came to Canada," he said quietly. "A storm came up in lambing time and an ewe was caught in the pasture and died. They found the lamb by the side of its mother and brought it in, like to die, to the house. Jean MacQuarrie—my grandmother she was, Gid—was nursing her first baby. And she took the lamb and put it to her breast and suckled it."

Upper Archie fell silent. Wordlessly they went down to the dinghy and shoved off, leaving behind them the island of stunted firs, and the sheep lying dead in the blue flag.

VI

THE quiet of a Sabbath afternoon lay on the three farms along the river.

In the spotless kitchen of the middle farm, Janet MacQuarrie rocked slowly back and forth. Dugal sat at the table with the Book open before him.

"For you have not read, my son," Janet MacQuarrie had told him. "And it is not fitting that the day should pass without."

The fire in the stove had gone down, and the windows above the boxes of flowering musk were open to the warm swampy odors sweeping up from the lower pasture.

In the quiet kitchen the clock ticked the moments away.

Janet MacQuarrie started at the sound of a knock on the front door.

"If it was Debbie come up from the lower farm it would be to the back door she'd come," she said to Dugal. "Gid or Upper Archie would have come to the back door too, I'm thinking."

She looked carefully out of the window.

"The Duncans bring their horse in, and whoever it is has left their horse at the bars or come on foot. So it cannot be the Duncans."

As she spoke she was tying on a fresh white apron.

"The Stones come up by the shore path, and I'd see them from the window. It's plain that it's not the Stones that have come today."

She started for the front door with decision in her manner.

"Go into the room, Dugal," she said, "and put up the blinds. For it will be the minister coming to tea."

The room was a little chill and dark when Dugal hurried to do his mother's bidding. For in each house in Harbor By Chance "the room" was saved for the great days alone. There the minister was received when he came to tea. There the young people were married. At the end it was in the room that the dead lay waiting for burial.

But when Janet MacQuarrie ushered the minister in, the afternoon sunlight fell on gay rag rugs, and the colors in the MacQuarrie plaid glowed warmly under the window. Brought by the first Archibald MacQuarrie from the Highlands, it served now to cover the strong pine chest which had carried the belongings of those pioneers to the Fundy. The calf-

skin-covered Bible which had come on that long journey still lay on the table, recording year by year the births and deaths of the MacQuarries.

The minister with a friendly word shook hands with young Dugal.

"It's a fine family you have, Mrs. MacQuarrie," he said. "A fine lot of boys to see at the kirk every Sabbath. This will be the youngest of them, I've no doubt."

"Ay, Dugal is the youngest. He'll be fifteen come next month," Janet MacQuarrie replied. Then to Dugal, standing shyly by the door, "Go bring the horse in from the bars, Dugal, for Mr. McLaren is staying to tea."

The boy went silently out, while the minister and Janet MacQuarrie sat down.

"The other boys will be home soon. They've all gone down the road a ways. Archie's gone to see Andrew Duncan who's been on his back these five months with the rheumatism."

"I must be calling on Andrew Duncan," commented the minister. "I'm just finding out who are the sick folk in Harbor By Chance."

"When you've been here a little longer you'll be knowing everybody," Janet MacQuarrie replied. "Andrew Duncan was getting over his trouble we were thinking, but he was taken again when he

was seining the White Head in the spring run of herring."

"It's wet work and hard! Your boys are weir fishermen too, aren't they, Mrs. MacQuarrie?"

"John and Donald tend the Herring Cove Weir," she answered him. "But Peter and Neil stay on the farm, or help their father in the store."

"I mind that Peter and Neil were home when I was here before," the minister commented. He had taken off his spectacles and was holding them to the light. "I mind the cream of tartar biscuits you were having that day, too. I'm thinking it was those cream of tartar biscuits that made me drive down river so early to have supper with you before kirk."

Janet MacQuarrie smiled a trifle reprovingly.

"It was on a week day you were here before, Mr. McLaren," she said to the minister. "But it's a cold supper you'll be having tonight."

"That's right and proper for the Sabbath day," the minister agreed quickly.

"But if you'll be coming down river in the middle of the week," she went on, "I'll be having the cream of tartar biscuits again."

While the sunlight crept across the room Janet MacQuarrie told the minister about the men and women who would sit under him as long as he stayed in the country: the Duncans down by the

lighthouse; the Stones who had taken in their hay one Sabbath afternoon when it looked like rain; old Lish Penny who lived in poverty in his old age, bitter and alone; and all the others who would gather that evening to worship God in the kirk at Harbor By Chance.

He had the story of Upper Archie and the boy Gid, from the time the gray gentle man had found happiness and companionship in the shy dark lad from the poor-house.

"It's too bad he never married and had a son of his own," Janet MacQuarrie told the minister. "Upper Archie is a kind man, Mr. McLaren, as you'll know when you've been longer in Harbor By Chance, and he has a great fondness for the little ones."

"I've heard that already, Mrs. MacQuarrie, and how good he's been to the boy he's adopted."

"Ay, he says Gid has been a son to him. And I'm not saying he isn't a good boy, is Gid. He talks but little and is given overmuch to brooding perhaps. I've seen him quick to anger. But he's been a good lad with Upper Archie, there's no doubt. And he's to marry Debbie in the spring."

"Debbie?" queried the minister.

"Debbie is Lower Archie's daughter," explained Janet.

"Lower Archie——," the minister hesitated. "There was some trouble, I've been told——"

Then he heard the story of Lower Archie's great trouble when for two months he would not go to the kirk.

"And he a member of the session, too, Mr. McLaren! It all came from the supper one day last summer—a supper to raise money for the new stove in the kirk, it was. For the stove smoked so that when the minister gave the hymn you couldn't hear the music for the people coughing with the smoke in their throats. It was sore needed, that stove for the kirk, and the supper brought in a fair lot of money to put to a new one.

"But late in the evening some of the young folks began to dance. Young Tony Luti played the fiddle, a daft tune that set them going. Lower Archie was sore grieved that there should be dancing at a supper given for the kirk stove."

Janet MacQuarrie's own lips were set disapprovingly as she told the story.

"After the dancing—for the minister had not said a word against it—Lower Archie told him how sinful he thought it was; and for two months afterward, Mr. McLaren, Lower Archie did not go to the kirk.

" 'I'll not keep Debbie away from the kirk,' he

told the minister, 'but as the sign and token of my grief that the minister of the kirk should allow dancing at the supper, I'll stay away myself.'

"For two months, Mr. McLaren, he stayed away. Every Sabbath evening he'd sit alone in the kitchen of the lower farm, and pray and read and sing.

"At last it came to him that he was doing a great wrong in staying away, and he went back. For he loved the kirk very much."

Janet MacQuarrie looked out of the window at the shadows lengthening over the fields. The minister polished his glasses while he considered the matter. Putting them on again, he looked at her over their steel rims.

"Perhaps he did right," he decided. "I doubt not that dancing's of the devil's making often enough. Did anyone rebuke the boy who did the playing?"

"Young Tony hasn't much understanding," explained Janet. "Although he plays the fiddle well enough, it's little anyone can say to him, or little anyone can blame him for what he does."

"But his father?"

"When you've been in Harbor By Chance a little longer, Mr. McLaren, you'll find that the Lutis are a queer lot. It was a girl from up river that was old Tony's mother, but she went to work in the sardine cannery in Eastport and married a foreign-

er. It's the foreign blood in them, I'm thinking, that makes the trouble."

Janet MacQuarrie walked across to the window. The sun was dipping behind the hills, sending its long rays across the gold mown fields.

"There are thunder heads coming up. We'll be having rain the night," she said. Then turning to the minister, "The boys will be getting home soon, and Archie, too. So I'll be putting the tea kettle to boil, Mr. McLaren."

As she prepared supper she went back and forth into the room, speaking to him of the affairs of the kirk and of her neighbors at Harbor By Chance.

"Though it's few we have near us, Mr. McLaren. Only Debbie to run up now and then from the lower farm. So I'm happy to be having you here for a cup of tea."

Gray twilight crept over the middle farm. They heard the voices of the boys coming in from the road. In a moment they entered the kitchen, and Peter went for a bucket of water from the spring. All silent lads, they had little to say to the minister. Donald alone talked to him of the run of herring and the threatened fall in prices.

Janet laid the unbleached linen cloth. As the darkness deepened she lit the lamp. The warm light fell on the boxes of flowering musk in the window.

"Which would you be liking, Mr. McLaren," asked Janet, "the strawberry or gooseberry preserve?"

"I've a great fondness for the gooseberry," the minister admitted.

"Then as soon as Archie comes in, the supper'll be ready," Janet MacQuarrie replied. "I cannot think what can be delaying him so."

The boys were becoming impatient when at last they heard their father's team turn into the barn. A few moments later Middle Archie came into the kitchen, washed his hands at the sink, and dried them on the roller towel.

"I've fed and watered your horse, Mr. McLaren," he greeted the minister. "When I saw him standing there I was glad to see you'd come to have a cup of tea with us before kirk."

The two men talked a few moments of herring and crops, and of the horse the minister had bought up river. Then Janet called them out into the kitchen. There was a moment's pause.

"Will you be asking the blessing tonight, Mr. McLaren?" asked Middle Archie.

They stood with bowed heads while the simple words were spoken, and then sat down around the lamp-lighted table.

"I've just been talking with Upper Archie and

Gid," Middle Archie remarked as he spread his bread with butter.

"And why weren't you bringing them home for tea?" exclaimed Janet.

"They were with Lower Archie," was the reply. "He said Debbie would surely have a bite for them. They were going down to old Tony Luti's before kirk."

"To Tony Luti's!" ejaculated Janet in amazement.

"Ay, to Tony Luti's."

Middle Archie's red face was grave. Around the lamp-lighted table the boys waited curiously.

"Yesterday morning they found five sheep on the Thumbcap—their throats cut and them left to die."

Janet MacQuarrie laid down her fork.

"Did Tony do it?" she breathed after a moment of stricken silence.

"There's no sure proof, I'm fearing, but there's no one but Tony would do it."

Middle Archie turned to the minister.

"You may know, Mr. McLaren, that there's been some talk lately about the ownership of the Thumbcap Weir on the ledges by the Thumbcap. Upper Archie took over the license years ago after Tony Luti had let it drop. But now Upper Archie's planning to give it to Gid and Debbie when they're mar-

ried, and Tony claims it's still belonging to him. Not only the weir but the Thumbcap itself. He's got a shingle with a deed on it that some man must have been giving him as a joke, selling him the Thumbcap for five dollars."

"If Upper Archie could show him a deed——" suggested the minister.

"There's the grant from George III to Archibald MacQuarrie, my grandfather," replied Middle Archie. "But Tony has not much understanding anyway and he's brooded over it all so that he's in no mind to pay much attention to a deed. And as for the weir, it's the license and not the grant that covers that."

"What are they going to do with him?" Janet asked.

"There's little good going to see him will do," declared Middle Archie.

"They must be a great trial to the settlement," commented the minister.

"If the Lutis had stayed in Eastport the settlement would be a deal better off," replied Janet firmly. "Except for a few new families like the Stones, all the families at Harbor By Chance came from the Highlands about the same time and they're all decent folk. But the Lutis have neither the fear of God nor the fear of the law in their

hearts!—Will you be having a little more of the gooseberry preserve, Mr. McLaren?"

"Thank you, I will. It's a fine preserve," complimented the minister, and added, "Perhaps if Upper Archie takes the matter to law he can get help."

"Upper Archie'll never go so far," prophesied Janet. "He's always said the Lutis are to be pitied for what they can't help. He says many people can't help themselves for the strength of the hate or the greed that's in them. He'll never make the Lutis pay."

"I'm not sure that he'll not have justice done this time," Middle Archie protested doubtfully. "He's more angry now than I've ever seen him before, though he's not saying much. Gid told me he'd walked most of the day in the woods so that he wouldn't be going to Tony with angry words while his feeling was still hot in him."

"What does Gid say about it?" put in young Peter.

"Gid's lowering black," said his father.

"Perhaps I might be saying something to Tony Luti," the minister remarked after some thought.

"The Lutis are not of the kirk," Middle Archie told him.

"Though it would be well for the Lutis if they could hear what you'd say to them," declared Janet.

"It was a strong sermon you gave us last Sabbath, and everyone in Harbor By Chance had need of it."

From mention of the sermon the talk drifted to the kirk up river where the minister held service every Sabbath morning, and to friends all along the river from the bay to fresh water. Through the window came the swelling chorus of the crickets and the warm fragrance of the night.

But again and again, as the group about the lamp lighted table paused in their talk, the thought of the dead sheep on the Thumbcap drew them like an undertow.

VII

THE news of the killing of the sheep came to Lower Archie and Debbie with the same shock of surprise and sense of ominous fear which had darkened the supper table at the middle farm.

"We cannot have things like that happening around the islands and going unpunished," Lower Archie declared with stern decision.

"It would no doubt be a good thing for poor Tony to be sent to St. Andrews jail—a good lesson to him for the future," Upper Archie agreed.

"Don't be calling him 'poor Tony,'" Lower Archie objected, "or you'll be deciding to let him off, and he has been a festering sore in Harbor By Chance for years. If half the things he's done could be proved he'd have been in jail long since."

Debbie spread the table and called them to supper before the sun was down.

"For it'll not be long to kirk time," she said. "And if you'd see Tony first, there's little time to waste."

Although they ate their meal quickly, twilight was reaching gray fingers into the kitchen before they were ready to start.

"Shake the teapot again, Debbie, and give me another swallow," asked Upper Archie. "For I'll be starting now down the road to see Tony."

"It might be well for me to go with you," suggested Lower Archie. "I could drive you to the middle farm to get Middle Archie, too."

"It's kindly offered," Upper Archie replied. "But except for Gid—and the wrong was done to him as much as to me—I'll be seeing Tony alone tonight."

Lower Archie started with Upper Archie toward the bars, while Gid paused a moment to speak with Debbie.

"Debbie," he said, "when I saw the sheep lying there, I felt—I felt as if it was you I had to defend—as if, Debbie, I could have killed."

"Hush, Gid lad," broke in Debbie. "Because you're loving me, you're loving the sheep and all the world, Gid. But don't be talking of killing."

"No, Debbie—but it was the anger that was in me—" He stopped. "I can't tell you how I felt, Debbie. I never can tell you what I'm feeling, no matter how I try."

He hurried out of the kitchen after Upper Archie, and the girl with the steady gray eyes and the red-gold braids turned to clear the supper dishes away.

As Upper Archie and Gid took the white road

through the woods the first stars of evening were already slashing the curtain of deepening blue above, and the last thin whistle of the whitethroat was hushed.

Upper Archie looked at the thunderheads piling up in the west.

"Let's hope the rain will hold off till after kirk, Gid," he remarked. "Or it'll be a wet walk home to the upper farm."

He did not speak again as he and Gid went on through the woods. They came out in a clearing where a little of the day seemed still to linger and then went again into the dark road between the crowding firs. They passed the kirk and saw across the fields the light of old Tom Luti's window. Silently they turned into the grass-grown lane that led back to the weathered gray house.

The Lutis were seated about their supper of corned codfish heads and potatoes when Gid and Upper Archie entered the kitchen.

The light from the kerosene lamp on the table filtered through a smoky glass chimney and fell uncertainly upon the black beard and black eyes of old Tony and the vacant face of his son. At one end of the table sat Tony's wife. Her hair, dyed red above her forehead, was fastened back in a scanty black knot.

A tall young woman with broad shoulders and a swinging stride brought some more potatoes from the stove as they entered.

"Good evening, Liz. I hadn't heard you'd come home," said Upper Archie kindly.

"Paw set me over from Eastport this morning."

Her eyes were dull black curtains concealing all expression and emotion as she spoke.

"It's been two years since Liz went away to the States," volunteered Tony. "She's seen a lot of sights, I can tell you. Clean to Boston she's been." The pride in his tone turned to suspicion. "What brings you here tonight, Archie MacQuarrie?"

"It's a serious matter that brings me here tonight. I'd be talking with you about some sheep."

Tony's wife, who had not spoken, motioned to the plate of corned codfish heads.

"Will you set in?" she offered.

"Gid and I have had our supper," refused Upper Archie and turned again to Tony. "Some sheep on the Thumbcap," he repeated simply.

"They're your own sheep, Archie MacQuarrie, and there's no need to be talkin' to me about 'em."

"Need enough, I'm thinking, Tony, for we've found five sheep killed on the Thumbcap—as you're knowing, no doubt, already."

Tony reached for another potato from the pot in

the center of the table. He cut it in two and put one half in his mouth before he spoke.

"How should I know about your sheep, Archie MacQuarrie?"

"There's no one else would be knowing, I'm thinking," replied Upper Archie briefly.

"It's a trick a dog might do!" broke in Gid fiercely.

He was silenced by a quiet word from Upper Archie.

"But the lad's right," he added. "It's not for a man to be killing sheep. There's a great sorrow in me that you've done it, Tony."

"Prove I done it!" he muttered. "There ain't been nothin' proved on me yet, not sense the world begun!"

He poured some molasses on his codfish heads.

"There'll be proof enough, Tony, if I need it. There'll be people who heard your engine when you crossed from Harbor By Chance. There'll be people who've heard you often enough claiming the Thumbcap and swearing to get it from me. If I want ever to send you to St. Andrews jail for it, I'm thinking it'll be easy enough."

Upper Archie watched the black-bearded man before him glance up in quick fear. "But instead of looking for proof, I'd be having you tell me your-

self, Tony. For I've not come here tonight to send you to jail. I've come, if you'll have it so, in friendship."

"Maw, make that brat wipe his nose!" broke in Liz with a disapproving look at her brother.

The woman with the red and black hair turned wearily.

"Wipe your nose, Tony," she said.

For a moment there was silence in the kitchen.

"So you'd be a friend of mine, Archie MacQuarrie," sneered Tony at last. "A fine friend of mine to get the Thumbcap Weir away from me!—a fine friend Gid, trying to drown me to get the weir for his own!"

"I'd have you understand about the Thumbcap Weir, Tony—that it was lawful and fair for me to take the privilege over when you'd let it drop for three years."

Patiently Upper Archie went over the account of the weir privilege which Tony claimed. Patiently he explained the points over which the black-bearded man had brooded so long.

"You needn't come here with your fine talk," Tony declared at last. "While the herring are a-runnin' every night me and Maw sets a'thinkin' till the wick burns out. I'll not be line fishing long, Archie MacQuarrie."

"Did you think that killing my sheep would get you back the Thumbcap Weir?" asked Upper Archie.

"You needn't be askin' me about your sheep, for I don't know nothin' about them," Tony replied hastily.

At the other side of the table young Tony had suddenly become alert.

"Is it the sheep it's about?" he asked in his high-pitched voice. "Paw, weren't you talkin' to Maw last night about some sheep? Maybe it's them sheep he wants to know about."

Tony turned on his son angrily.

"Shet your mouth," he cried. "The sheep you're talkin' about had nothin' to do with this."

"Go get the balloons I brung for you and show 'em off," put in Liz hastily.

The boy hurried into another room and came back with several balloons tugging at the ends of their strings. They gleamed red and green and blue in the lamplight as he sat down in the corner to play with them.

Tony had hurried on after the interruption.

"You won't keep the Thumbcap long," he was saying. "Not for long, Archie MacQuarrie. There'll be enough people to help me get it back, I tell you. Men around Harbor By Chance and around the

islands too. They'll not doubt my writing on the shingle! Liz, bring that shingle here!"

Liz looked on the shelf among a litter of wicks, fishlines, and bottles. From behind them she pulled out the shingle. Old Tony took it from her triumphantly.

"You were saying my writing didn't count for nothing, Archie MacQuarrie. Now you can see it with your own eyes. Here it is—'To Tony Luti, and his son Tony, who will be as smart as his father some day, the Thumbcap is hereby sold for five dollars and a bottle of whisky, according to due process of the law.' "

Upper Archie read the scrawled words with a smile.

"That's five dollars and a bottle of whisky he got from you as a joke—though it's nearer a fraud, I'm thinking, to take it from you, and you not knowing any better. But the man that wrote that never owned the Thumbcap, Tony, and couldn't sell it to you."

"It's as good a deed as your writing on the paper from the king, Archie MacQuarrie. How do you know the king owned it? I ask you that!"

Tony looked at his visitors exultantly. Upper Archie put the shingle back into his outstretched hand.

"It's little understanding you have, Tony," he said sadly. "Have you never been hearing before that the king granted all the land here to the first settlers who came over? It's a sure writing I showed you, and there's no fault to be found with it."

"But the writing on the shingle makes the Thumbcap mine," insisted Tony. "And you'll not deny that I had the license to the Thumbcap Weir right enough."

"The Marine and Fisheries always have someone take up a weir license when it's been dropped," went on Upper Archie with his quiet explanation. "If I hadn't taken it up, it would have been someone else, Tony. There was no sign you ever intended to rebuild after all the line fishing you'd been doing. It's my own weir and the only means I have to earn my bread and butter, or I'm thinking I'd be giving the license back to you, just to keep you from accusing me all the time of taking it unjustly."

"I'm not the only one that'll be saying so, Archie MacQuarrie," repeated Tony doggedly. "You needn't think the MacQuarries are so fine that everybody in Harbor By Chance is your friend, ready to help you out."

"There's no man but you who's ever been my enemy," replied Upper Archie with gentle bewilderment.

"No man who's ever told you so!" he cried heatedly. "But there's plenty that are tired of the pride of the MacQuarries, thinkin' they're so fine with their three farms and their weirs. There's plenty'll be glad to see you come down a peg, you and the brat from the poor-house."

Gid flushed angrily but did not speak.

"Gid has been a son to me for twenty years, Tony Luti," Upper Archie said quietly. "He's to have the Thumbcap Weir in the spring when he marries Debbie from the lower farm. And it's as much for him as for myself that I've come tonight to try to make you our friend. But there's none can speak like that of him and be my friend."

Young Tony was batting a red balloon about with his hand. Up to the ceiling it rose, bounced back from a clothesline extending across the room, tangled itself a moment in a red shirt hanging there, and was caught again by the boy. His delighted high-pitched laughter rang through the kitchen.

"There's no one here wanting to be your friend!" Tony growled.

"If not your friendship, then your promise that you'll do us no more harm. I'd have that," said Upper Archie.

"I make no promises, Archie MacQuarrie. I'll have my rights."

Tony left the table and walked across to the stove. A blue balloon had joined the red and was bobbing about the room with flashes of jocund color.

"We'll have our rights too," Gid broke in. "We can take it to law."

"Ay, Tony. If there's no way of making peace, we'll have to have the protection of the law, I'm fearing."

Liz looked at her father with her dull black eyes.

"You'll do well to keep away from the law, Paw," she said warningly. "I was in jail once when I was away in the States, in jail for stealing. You'll do well to keep away from jails."

Tony dug his hands into his pockets defiantly.

"I'm not in jail yet. You prove I killed the sheep first." He looked scornfully at Gid, standing now by the window in angry silence. "Prove that I done it—you fine MacQuarries and your brat from the poor-house."

Gid's eyes blazed. He jumped forward.

"It's twice you've said that, Tony Luti. A third time——"

"Proud of your family and your farms, proud of your weirs when the herring come in! Thinkin' you're so fine and better than the other folks of Harbor By Chance."

"No, Tony—" Upper Archie stopped helplessly

as the voice of the angry man in front of him went on.

"Fine talkin' and crafty dealin', you MacQuarries. Kirk on Sunday and steal my weir away on a week day. There'll be plenty who'll be glad to see you come down a peg, you and the brat yonder, him making himself out so fine——"

Gid's face went white. His clenched fist shot out and Tony Luti fell beside the stove, blinking stupidly.

Liz leaped from her chair, and moving swiftly to the stove seized the iron poker.

The gray old man clutched Gid's shoulder.

"Get outdoors, Gid," he urged, pulling him back from old Tony Luti.

"I won't hit him again. I had to hit him then—" burst out Gid passionately.

"Get outdoors!"

Tony struggled to his feet and stood beside Liz. In the confusion the boy had let go his balloons and they were floating, red and blue and green, over their heads.

"I'm seeing now it's no use, Tony, to talk to you in friendliness. If I'd been knowing it before I'd not have come."

Upper Archie turned toward the door. Gid walked beside him, still white with anger.

"Jest prove I killed the sheep; that's all I asks!" Tony called defiantly after them.

They stepped outside the door and of a sudden the night was black around them. The stars were dark and clouds were heavy in the sky. Only across the fields from the windows of the kirk came light and the sound of singing.

"I'll not be a line fisherman long when the Thumbcap Weir's mine!" they heard him shout.

He stood in the lighted square of his door shaking his fist after them. Near by stood Liz with the poker still in her hand. Behind them the lamplighted kitchen was filled with bobbing balloons and the high-pitched laughter of young Tony.

VIII

THE little congregation of worshippers in the kirk was still singing when Upper Archie and Gid came in.

Debbie had watched for them when she and Lower Archie drove down from the lower farm. But although she could see the lighted window of Tony Luti's kitchen, she could catch no glimpse of Upper Archie or Gid coming across the fields.

She had watched for them with every step at the door and in the aisle. Middle Archie and Janet came in and took their places in the pew which they had occupied for many a year. With them came the minister and behind them their five sons. The minister climbed the steps of the pulpit and bowed his head in prayer.

Debbie watched them all come in and waited still for Gid and Upper Archie. The kerosene lamps had been lighted and gleamed along the walls of the kirk in front of their bright reflectors. Across the dark window above the pulpit a fir tree swayed slowly back and forth, a dark living spire above the lamp-lit kirk.

Now came a family who had driven over from

a settlement around the bay. Angus Duncan and his wife arrived, and after them the Stones. Old Lish Penny stamped in with his cane and sat down directly beneath the high pulpit. One after another the families of Harbor By Chance filled the square pews.

The service began, but Upper Archie and Gid had not arrived.

Debbie heard a surprised whisper behind her: "The singing man's not here today!"

And when the minister gave the hymn it was Middle Archie who lifted the tune.

Debbie's voice faltered in the singing when at last she saw Gid and Upper Archie come in. Although Gid's eyes sought her level gray gaze as he passed, she could not tell from his set face what had been the result of the talk with Tony Luti.

The hymn ended. In the pulpit the minister was turning the pages of the Bible. The congregation settled again in their pews.

Debbie listened to the sounds of the night swelling about the little kirk. The crickets were loud in the still evening. Far off thunder rolled across the sky.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?"

Debbie heard the words dimly as from a great distance. Her thoughts were still upon Gid and Upper Archie. In the spring she and Gid would be going to the island and there Gid would be tending the Thumbcap Weir. The trouble with old Tony Luti would surely be settled then. And their days would pass in quietness.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."

The words rang through the silence of the kirk. Debbie watched the fir tree sway slowly across the window in quiet time to the cadences of the reading.

She could see Janet MacQuarrie's face turned toward the minister as the solemn words of Scripture were read. Dreamily she remembered that the stern woman with the quiet eyes sitting there beside her husband and her five stalwart sons had labored through long years for the building of the kirk at Harbor By Chance. When the nearest kirk was at the shiretown, she had walked the thirty miles to Communion across the Bocabec Hills.

Suddenly she remembered how rich in the memory of the MacQuarries was the lamp-lit room of the kirk. There Sabbath after Sabbath for many a year the three Archies had worshipped. And she

knew that long before the building of the kirk the first Jean MacQuarrie who came to the Passamaquoddy had taught the Indians from the Book she had carried with her from the Highlands.

A swift fierce pride filled her for the stuff from which the MacQuarries were made.

"The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually; and the wind returneth again according to his circuits."

The rumble of thunder sounded again afar off.

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."

Debbie felt the slow rhythm of the words creep through her. Into her heart crept the breathing silence of the night.

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done."

Slowly the minister's voice rolled on to the end. Debbie heard the book close. The minister peered over his glasses at the farmers and fishermen of Harbor By Chance, and said solemnly,

"May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word. Let us pray."

In her corner Debbie bowed her head. Beside her Lower Archie leaned forward, resting his arms on the back of the pew in front. Above the bowed heads again the minister's voice droned on.

With quiet austerity the service continued until at last the minister was ready to read his text. Under the pulpit old Lish Penny cupped his hand behind his ear. The people settled again in their pews for the sermon.

The rumble of thunder had come nearer. Across the fields swept the breath of the coming rain. A little stir crept over the congregation as the first drops clattered on the window.

Then the lamp-lit kirk was still again, with its quietness broken only by the slow words of the minister and the gathering crescendo of the rain. Debbie watched the fir tree bend before the wind.

Suddenly through the wet night came the thin wail of a violin. Again the people stirred and were quiet. Debbie listened to it flying with piercing sadness through the crash of rain and thunder.

The player reached the end. Then a lilting melody danced across the fields, impish, dancing—diabolic, some of the tightened lips in the kirk seemed to say.

The quietness that had filled Debbie there in the rain-lashed room gave way to a troubled restlessness. The melody rose and fell. A fresh squall of rain washed across the panes.

Debbie saw Gid move slightly in his place. His face was still strained, and although his eyes were fastened on the minister, Debbie was sure that his mind was not upon the sermon. She wondered again what he would tell her of the hour in Tony Luti's kitchen. She saw Upper Archie's head bowed and his face gentle as always. Still the melody rose and fell.

The minister ended his sermon and announced the final hymn. For a few moments the wild air of the violin was drowned in the measured solemnity of an old psalm. Then with the long drawn "Amen" the lilting notes again danced in all the corners of the kirk.

The restless cadence of rain and violin accompanied the quiet words of the benediction:

"The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen."

Out into the aisles of the kirk came the people of Harbor By Chance: the five sons of Middle Archie in their young strength; the MacQuarrie men, the Duncans and the Stones, with straight backs and

steady eyes; Lish Penny, stooped and grizzled, and old.

Together they waited at the back of the kirk for the rain to end.

"The Thumbcap'll stock a pretty lot this year, I've heard!" Lish Penny remarked to Upper Archie as they stood there.

"Ay, Lish. Better than she's done for a long time, we're hoping."

"But it's not the first time I'm telling you there's a curse on the Passamaquoddy weirs, Archie. You'd do better to set your trawls like Lower Archie here than to build weirs to catch a shoal of herring on a tide."

The old man stamped past them with his cane. A few boys smiled at his constant strain of bitterness. Through the kirk still crept that gay daft music from over the wet fields.

Beside the cold stove Janet MacQuarrie was inquiring for Andrew Duncan's rheumatism. The Stones were speaking to the family from the settlement around the bay. In the kirk the murmur of voices rose and fell, while the thunder growled, now far away.

While the three Archies talked, Debbie stood at the door of the kirk with Gid.

"I heard little of the sermon, I'm fearing, Gid,

for it's been on my mind to know what Tony Luti said to you and Uncle Archie."

"He's fighting mad about the weir," Gid said briefly.

Debbie waited.

"I knocked him down, Debbie."

"Gid lad, did it come to blows with you and Tony? Then it was an ill day when you and Uncle Archie went to see him!"

"There was little use in going. That's the truth."

Gid was twisting his cap in his hand as he stared out into the darkness. The music had stopped and now the rain sounded thin and cool around them in the night.

"Liz got home today," Gid said at last.

"It's been a long time since she went away. A year—two years, if I mind!" Debbie's surprise was in her voice.

"She's been up around Boston, too. And she's been in jail," he told her.

"In jail, Gid!"

"That's what she was saying. Her father'd be there too, if there was justice done."

They were silent for a moment as they looked at the house across the fields. A lighted window blinked as a tree swayed in front of it. A horse scraped his hoof impatiently near by.

"It's holding up," someone said behind them.

The minister was first to leave the shelter of the kirk.

"It's a long drive up river," he said, shaking his head as he peered out. Then to Upper Archie, "I can be giving you and the lad a lift to the upper farm, Mr. MacQuarrie."

The three men climbed into the buggy and with a slap of the reins drove across the lane of light from the open door and turned into the road.

Soon afterward the Duncans started on their drive through the settlement and out the lighthouse road.

The kerosene lamps were blown out, and only a few swollen drops still fell from the eaves of the kirk when Debbie and Lower Archie walked across the wet grass to their horse.

The wheels creaked as they backed into the road. In a moment the walls of fir shut in. The heavy scent of the wet night and the pungent odor of fir rose about them. For a little while they trotted briskly. Then at the foot of the long hill the horse settled to a walk.

Debbie broke the silence.

"Gid says Liz Luti's home again."

"Ay, and the boy breaks the Sabbath day to play her home from jail."

Lower Archie let the reins slip loosely through his hands as the horse, swaying back and forth across the road, slowly climbed the hill.

"There's a hard time ahead for Gid and Upper Archie, I'm fearing. And for you too, Debbie lass!"

"I'm not troubled about it," Debbie replied quietly.

"But Tony'll make it hard for you and Gid when the Thumbcap's yours, Debbie. It's his tricks and his meanness I'm fearing for you."

They had come out of the woods and were trotting along between cleared fields. The moon had torn its way through the clouds and was lighting up the pastures and the white road ahead.

Again the scent of clover and wet earth stormed the night with sweetness.

A wheel scraped on a rounded sheet of bare rock, then rolled on along the wet road. They reached the lane and turned into the lower farm.

The pallor of moonlight was on the white house in the bouldered pasture and upon the small dark fish house on the beach above high water. The barn loomed before them, and without guidance the horse turned toward the wide doors.

While her father unharnessed the horse, Debbie went into the kitchen and lighted the lamps. In a few moments Lower Archie came in, his broad

frame filling the door, his stern yet kindly eyes smiling above his long white beard.

He took a long drink of cold water from the wooden bucket beside the sink. Then wiping the glistening drops from his beard he hung the dipper on its nail again.

"Good night, Debbie," he said, taking his lamp to the stair door. "It's an early start in the morning, for I'll be leaving on the flood."

A few moments later Debbie followed him with light footsteps up the stairs. The quiet of the rain-wet night filled the lower farm house.

IX

SUMMER, mellow and heavy with clover until late in September, at last was gone. The keen days of October marched in flaming pageantry over the three farms along the river.

"It's the fall of the year," Janet MacQuarrie reminded Debbie. "The cranberries are red now in the rocky pasture."

"I've been thinking for a week or more, Aunt Janet, that it's time to be preserving them for the winter, and I've only been waiting till I was sure they were dead ripe."

"You'd best be doing it now, Debbie, or you'll not have them picked before the frost gets at them."

It was a day of flooding windy light when Debbie at last took her pails to the rocky pasture.

The land beyond swept up to a bald hilltop, and there, too, the cranberry vines were clinging. From Harbor By Chance and even from other settlements around the bay, the women and children would come before snowfall to strip the vines of their scarlet fruit.

Already the slopes of the Bocabec Hills were dotted with the first cranberry pickers. Debbie, working alone in the pasture, could see the Duncans half way up the hill. Beyond them young Tony Luti and his mother were busy on their knees. Still farther up the rocky slopes a group of boys and girls had found some heavily laden vines and their shouts and laughter sounded clearly through the crisp air.

The small red cranberries rattled swiftly into Debbie's pail. She had been working for some time in the cranberry patch of the rocky pasture when she heard her name called from the fence and saw that Mrs. Duncan had come down the hill.

"It's a good cranberry year, Debbie," she called. "Some years seem to be good for everything—herring and cranberries and hay."

Debbie left her pail on the ground and went over to the fence.

"This has been a good year for us all," she agreed. "Has the White Head Weir been doing well, Mrs. Duncan?"

"Ay, Debbie. Angus was saying only last week that if the herring stay inshore for a little longer it'll be an easier winter for us than we've had for many a year."

"For all Harbor By Chance, too, I'm thinking," was Debbie's grave reply. "My father's well pleased

with the summer. Though it's true the best luck has gone to the weirs and not to the line fishermen."

"But it's often the weirs that have the ill luck, Debbie. So a good year doesn't come amiss."

"Oh, I didn't mean it unkindly, Mrs. Duncan, when I said it was lucky only for the weirs. I'm glad indeed that it's been so good a year for them."

"We're all glad of that, Debbie."

The woman on the other side of the fence turned away, and Debbie returned to her cranberry patch. From time to time she heard the laughter of the children clearly across the sunlit distance. She heard their shouts when one discovered a new patch, and she saw them disappear around the shoulder of the hill.

Wave on wave of sunlight and shadow swept up from the asters, blue at the river's edge, over the brown fields and thickets of goldenrod, to the masses of crimson maple on the Bocabec Hills. And on the rocky slopes the cranberry pickers knelt before the glossy vines.

Debbie's first pail was filled to the brim and the berries were rattling into the second, when she heard the children shout again from the top of the hill. She saw that young Tony Luti had worked up the slope and was alone near the shouting children. He stood up as they burst into song. Debbie could

not hear the words, but she saw Tony scramble awkwardly down the hill to his mother. As he fled, the song broke off in shrieks of laughter, and the children on the hilltop, moving black against the sky, disappeared on the other side.

The sunlit moments hurried by. A flock of crows flew across the sky with a loud cawing. A woodpecker drummed on a tree nearby. Steadily the scarlet berries filled Debbie's pail.

She stood up at last and looked with satisfaction at the result of her work. Mrs. Duncan was still stripping the vines on the hillside above.

"I'll be having a word or two with her before I start home," Debbie decided.

She climbed the fence and started up the hill. When she stood beside Mrs. Duncan the wind was whipping her skirt and tossing the strands which had escaped her coiled gold braids.

"It's not often that I see my friends, for we've no neighbors to run in of an afternoon," she smiled as she dropped on the ground beside Mrs. Duncan. "So I'm thinking it would be a pity to go home so, soon, when I could be talking to you. My father'll not be coming ashore for a good three hours yet."

Her fingers worked swiftly as she helped fill Mrs. Duncan's pail. They spoke of the weirs again, of the falling prices and the closing canneries.

"But there's two or three open, Debbie, and the season's not over for a while yet."

"It's a late season," Debbie agreed. "Gid was telling me there's always a boat from the packers standing by for the Thumbcap catch."

"Have you decided yet when you and Gid'll be married, Debbie?" Mrs. Duncan glanced curiously at the girl beside her.

"Not till the spring—and we'll go to the island then."

"Gid's a good lad. I hope you'll be happy, Debbie, for there's no one in Harbor By Chance who's deserving their happiness more."

They picked silently for a few minutes. Around the hill they heard the calls and occasional shrill laughter of the children, and far away they could see the whitecaps where the river widened to the bay.

Mrs. Duncan threw a handful of cranberries into the pail and stood up.

"Debbie," she said decidedly. "There's something I'm minded to say to you. I'm thinking you ought to know."

Debbie went on picking the scarlet berries.

"It's been troubling me since my son Robert told me, nigh on two weeks ago. The night that Upper Archie's sheep were killed on the Thumbcap, Deb-

bie, my Robert was coming home from Eastport. He'd bought a little paint for the house and was bringing it across the line. And, Debbie, if you mind that night, it was black and foggy."

Debbie nodded. She had folded her hands in her lap and was looking up at Mrs. Duncan.

"He missed the channel somehow, Debbie, and when he thought he was in the open bay, he found himself close to the Thumbcap. It was only by the grace of God, I'm thinking, that he didn't go on the ledges there. But he came about and got through west of the Thumbcap, and somehow—though how he did it is more than he can tell—he came safe through Letete Passage and into Harbor By Chance. It's God's hand on the tiller I've told him, Debbie, for he never could have been making it alone."

Gaunt and earnest she stood against the sky. Debbie's gray eyes searched her face.

"But what I'm coming to, Debbie, is this: when he was close into the Thumbcap he saw Tony Luti's boat drawn up on the beach."

Mrs. Duncan sat down again on the rocky ground beside the cranberry vines.

"We didn't know for two or three days that the sheep had been killed that night, Debbie. But when Angus came home and told us about it, young Robert told us what he'd seen."

"It's the first proof's been found that old Tony did it," Debbie said quietly. "Though we knew no one else who would have reason for it."

"I knew there's been no proof found, Debbie, and it's been on my mind to tell you this. Robert was all for keeping it quiet. He said he'd no mind to be mixed up in a lawsuit, and wouldn't have told it even to his own, if he'd thought I'd have been for telling it to you."

"Then he'll not like it that you've told me," Debbie said.

"He's come around now to thinking it should be told, Debbie. He's working off his taxes on the roads up river, you know. This week when he went back he said that if I was minded to say a word to Gid or Upper Archie about it, he'd not go against it—seeing that he's owing his life to Gid, with small help, as he remembers it, from Tony."

"Uncle Archie'll be thankful for it, Mrs. Duncan."

"I'd be glad to do a kindness to Upper Archie, Debbie," replied Mrs. Duncan. "But it's not that alone. It's better for the truth to be told plain and outright."

"There's little good in a secret that's hidden away," Debbie nodded.

"And when Robert was led safe to Harbor By

Chance through that fog, he'd do well to tell the truth. He could scarce see a boat's length in that fog, Debbie, from the time he left Peg's Hole."

"He'd put into Peg's Hole, Mrs. Duncan?" Debbie hesitated. "He'd been drinking then?"

"He'd had a drop there—for it was a chill night and a long way to Harbor By Chance. But he was none the worse for it, Debbie. It was all because of the fog that he got lost. In that fog it was a miracle that he got through Letete passage."

"He has a great deal to be thankful for, it's true enough!" agreed Debbie. She was picking cranberries again with swift fingers.

The sun was rolling down the great spaces of the sky when Mrs. Duncan stood up again.

"The day's going, Debbie, and I'd best be starting home. You've made the berrying easier with helping me as you've done. Debbie, I'll not set eyes on Upper Archie till kirk next Sabbath. So if you're seeing him, you'll tell him my son saw Tony on the Thumbcap the night the sheep were killed."

"I'll tell him surely, Mrs. Duncan," promised Debbie.

She watched the tall gaunt woman carry her pails of cranberries down the hill and take the path into the woods to shorten her way to the settlement. Young Tony Luti and his mother had come close

enough for Debbie to see the streaks of red and black in the mother's hair as they squatted in the cranberry patch. The group of children were ready to start homeward.

Debbie climbed the fence again into the pasture and picked up her own pails. The glowing slope to the river's edge was still alive with moving light and shadow. She felt the crisp wind press against her as she started down the hill. She walked slowly at first, holding her brimming pails carefully and choosing her steps with caution on the outcropping rocks. Then nearly at the foot of the hill the ground stretched out into smooth turf, and, with the buoyant wind at her back, she ran until she stopped at the pasture bars, breathless and shining-eyed.

There she set her pails on the ground and straightened her dress and hair demurely. The children were crossing the pasture behind her in a straggling line. They passed the boy and his mother just as Debbie let down the bars and stepped into the road.

She started on in the direction of the lower farm. Then at a sudden burst of song, she turned and saw the children huddling at a safe distance from young Tony and pointing at him derisively.

Across the rocky shadow-swept pasture came the melody she had heard before. This time she caught the words:

"Little Tony Luti has no comb,
He combs his hair with a codfish bone."

A flock of crows flew again across the sky with a harsh cawing. Behind the singing children the bitter berries of a roundwood tree flamed in bunches of scarlet.

With a glance at the dipping sun, Debbie hurried on along the white road. The woods closed in around her and hid the rocky pasture. But on the wind sweeping through the topmost branches of the firs came the shrill taunt,

"Little Tony Luti has no sled,
He slides down hill on a codfish head."

X

THE horse had been fed and watered and all the tasks around the lower farm completed before darkness fell. In the kitchen the table was spread for supper. The fire blazing in the stove softened the chill of the star-stabbed night and made the kitchen snug and welcoming for Lower Archie, home from his day on the bay with the line fishermen.

Debbie waited until they were eating their supper before she spoke of the news the day had brought.

"I had it from Mrs. Duncan in the rocky pasture," she said. "For we were picking cranberries together there."

Lower Archie listened silently.

"It is well then," he said at last. "Upper Archie has been fearing that the proof of Tony Luti's guilt would be wanting. Now there can be justice done."

"Mrs. Duncan said she'd not be seeing Uncle Archie until next Sabbath," Debbie added.

"Tomorrow I'll put in to Deadman's Island and see him and Gid. They should be knowing without delay," spoke Lower Archie with decision.

He sat gravely silent, watching Debbie while she washed the dishes and made the kitchen tidy for the night.

"No doubt this will make it easier for you and Gid in the spring," he said gently at last. "I'd not have you living in fear of Tony then, Debbie lass, and if by this we can bring him to justice, it'll settle all that's been troubling me."

The blazing days of autumn flared splendidly on the Bocabec Hills for a little longer and burned out. Poplar and birch stood stark and brittle, gray ashes of the flaming color which had swept them. The alders by the milk house on the lower farm dropped their shrivelled leaves into the brook. Only the tall firs of the great woods, and the stunted and twisted firs of the islands stood in walls of living green around the Passamaquoddy.

All Harbor By Chance was busy with preparations for winter. The last cranberry pickers came home from the slopes of the Bocabec Hills with pails of berries which soon bubbled on every stove and filled every house with their biting fragrance.

Across the bay boats were chugging back and forth bringing home provisions. Through the ledges of Letete passage where the tide ran fast, they were going to the shiretown. Straight across the bay and over the line they were heading for East-

port. And always they brought back supplies for the white months to come.

The cellars were stocked with barrels of potatoes and turnips, with salt cod and smoked haddock, with strips of salt pork and barrels of apples. Some of their earnings went for warm coats and fur caps, for new shoes and woolen mittens.

Lower Archie one gray day left his boat at the mooring.

"I'll not go out to set my trawls today, Debbie," he said. "It's time the house was banked for winter before the frost gets into the ground."

The fog hung heavy all that day, and hour after hour they could hear the foghorn blowing from the Wolves. The gray chill of approaching winter lay over the hills and pastures.

By nightfall Lower Archie had packed earth solidly around the house close to the foundations and had covered the banking with a warm layer of fir and spruce boughs. He looked at his work with satisfaction.

"That'll keep us snug and warm for the winter, Debbie," he said.

A few days later word came to Harbor By Chance that the last of the canneries had closed. One by one the weir fishermen came back from the island camps for the winter.

Upper Archie and Gid had stripped the Thumbcap Weir and strengthened it for its battle with the ice and storms that lay ahead.

"We've let the racks down and taken all the sticking brush out," Upper Archie told Middle Archie in the store. "We've driven some hardwood stakes, too. If no heavy ice comes in, I'm thinking we'll be able to keep the weir from going down this winter."

"The better for Gid and Debbie in the spring then," was Middle Archie's jovial reply. "But you've not done anything yet about Tony Luti, have you, Archie? It's Tony and not the ice you'd best be looking out for this winter."

Upper Archie nodded.

"I'm not forgetting him. But it's best not to be hasty, I'm thinking."

Middle Archie's red face became redder.

"No one'll be saying you've been hasty with all the waiting and shilly-shallying you've done," he declared with impatient amusement. "You were ready enough to have justice done when the sheep were killed. But now when young Robert's ready to be your witness in court, you'll let it drop."

"Young Robert's been a good friend to me and Gid," nodded Upper Archie. "It's because he's given us proof, that I'm thinking we can take our

time about having the law on Tony—or even letting him go free."

Middle Archie looked at him in amazement. He uttered an exclamation of relief as the door opened and Lower Archie came in.

"Maybe you can talk some sense into Upper Archie," he greeted him. "He'll be giving Tony Luti the Thumbcap next."

"No, I wouldn't go as far as that," remarked Upper Archie mildly. "Pull up a chair by the stove, Archie. These first cold days put a chill into your bones."

He puffed quietly at his pipe for a moment. Lower Archie spoke first, briefly and sternly as was his wont.

"If Tony's not made to see that punishment's sure, another year'll bring the same trouble again to you and Gid—and Debbie."

"His threats are common knowledge," put in Middle Archie.

"It's Gid and Debbie I'm thinking of," Upper Archie explained. "If we're sending him to jail, he'll be bitter angry with us when he comes out. You'll not deny that. For he'd still be claiming the Thumbcap Weir and he'd have his jail sentence against us besides. It'd be hard for Gid and Debbie then. But now that we've proof against him, and he knows it,

he'll be feeling kindly toward us if we show him mercy."

"He'll hate you the more for it," was Lower Archie's brief comment.

"He'll not hate us as much as if we'd sent him to jail," maintained Upper Archie. "He'll be bound not to do us harm, bound by knowing we've evidence against him, and by knowing we haven't used it."

They all smoked silently for a few moments.

"It's a wrong kind of thinking, but there's nothing I can say to it. It's your own doing whatever's the end of it." Lower Archie knocked his pipe against the stove and stood up. "Whatever you're deciding on, it'll not settle the ownership of the Thumbcap in Tony's mind. You'd not say that."

"No, I'd not say that," granted Upper Archie. "But I've been thinking long about that very thing. It's little use for me to be trying to explain it to him any more. He'll think I'm tricking him when I'm in my coffin. But if Angus Duncan now would go to him and explain it, he'd know Angus'd have no call to be telling him anything but the truth. Would you speak a word to Tony as a kindness to me, Angus?"

Angus Duncan took down his feet from the stove.

"It's glad I am to do a kindness to you, Upper Archie," he said.

"I'll not forget it," said Upper Archie, simply.

He rose with a word of farewell and started to the door. On an afterthought he turned back.

"If Angus fails in making peace, I'll be going to the shiretown to talk it over with the fishery officer, and if he's for sending him to jail I'll not go against it." He hesitated. "For that trip to the shiretown I may be needing a boat, though Gid and I were thinking we'd be hauling up the boats and seine reel tomorrow."

"There's my boat you can be using," offered Lower Archie. "And I'll go with you to see there's justice done."

"I'm hoping we'll not have to go at all," replied Upper Archie. "But if we do, it'll be kindly done for you to come." He turned to Middle Archie. "If one of your boys could give a hand to the work tomorrow, Middle Archie, it would make it come that much easier."

"Peter'll be there to help, Archie. The others will be stripping the weir at Herring Cove."

"Robert's home and can come well enough," added Angus Duncan.

"I'll be grateful to them both," said Upper Archie, and went out.

Another day swung in from the Fundy and spread bleakly over the woods and pastures of Harbor By Chance.

Early in the morning young Peter MacQuarrie and Robert Duncan arrived at the upper farm to help with the boats and the seine reel. The first snow came riding on the cold east wind, and the men at work on the beach were clad in oil skins and sou'-westers.

The weir boats at last lay keels up beside the canvas-covered motor boat. The seine reel was drawn up on the beach above the high water mark, where it stood skeleton-like as the bare trees. The seine itself was salted down and stored away safe from rot in the fish house. Every preparation had been made for winter.

When all was done the four men came up from the beach together. The snow was still spitting in fine flakes that melted as they touched the brown fields.

"You'll do well to come into the house to get warm before you start home," offered Upper Archie.

"I'll be going on, for it's a long walk home," young Robert decided.

As he and Peter said good-bye, he referred to Tony Luti.

"My father was saying at breakfast, he'd be seeing Tony before night," he said.

"It'll be a kindness I'll not forget," replied Upper Archie earnestly.

He and Gid, busy that afternoon about the farm, had little time to think of Tony. The gray day deepened into dusk. The lamp in the kitchen was lighted and together the gentle Scotsman and the dark lad with the moody eyes ate their frugal supper.

"I'd not be surprised if Angus Duncan drives up," remarked Upper Archie. "He's had time enough, I'm thinking, to talk to Tony."

But no wheels creaked in the lane, and no knock sounded on the kitchen door. The fire in the stove died down to glowing coals, and Upper Archie and Gid took their lamps upstairs.

"It would have been a cold drive for him," admitted Upper Archie. "Particularly as we'll be seeing him in the morning, no doubt, at the store. He can tell us there what passed between him and Tony."

The lights went out at last and the upper farm was dark.

The morning was not far spent before Upper Archie and Gid started again for the settlement. They found Middle Archie's store warm and welcoming. Lish Penny was there and Angus Duncan.

Lower Archie, too, had come down for a word with his cousins.

"I've been to Tony," Angus Duncan told them at once. "But it did little good, I'm thinking. He'd have nothing to say to me at all. I told him he'd get the truth from the fishery officer at the shiretown if he'd not listen to me. But he'd not hear of going to the shiretown."

"It's grateful I am to you, nevertheless," sighed Upper Archie.

"Tony's bound he'll stay a safe distance from the shiretown jail," chuckled Middle Archie.

"The fear of jail's the only thing that'll move him," agreed Lower Archie. "You'd do better to send him there."

Upper Archie nodded reluctantly.

"The first good day, we'll go to the shiretown—the three of us——"

He looked at Gid doubtfully.

"It's a thing for older heads and cooler heads than Gid's," declared Lower Archie.

"Gid needs a day for courting Debbie," chuckled Middle Archie.

"I'd like well to be going," said Gid hesitantly.

"It'll be time enough to decide that when we start," decided Upper Archie. "But it may be well for you to keep out of this as much as you can, Gid,

so that when you and Debbie have the weir for your own, Tony'll have less feeling against you."

For the next few days the three Archies watched the weather impatiently. When night swung in over the Passamaquoddy, and the work of the day was done, they talked of little else than the forthcoming trip to the shiretown.

"It's been on my mind to settle things peaceably for you and Debbie," Upper Archie said to Gid. "But maybe after all, the only way to be settling it is to have the law on him."

The black-bearded figure of Tony stood in the background of their thoughts, even when Gid and Debbie talked quietly in the kitchen at the lower farm. But their talk was of spring and of apple trees in bloom.

"For in apple blossom time, we'll be married," Gid lad," said Debbie happily.

"The months are long till the apple trees bloom," Gid replied. "It'll be a glad day, Debbie, when we start for the island."

As they talked, Lower Archie came in from the barn.

"The wind's coming around, and there'll be a good day tomorrow. You'd best tell Upper Archie to be ready to go across the bay with me tomorrow, Gid," he remarked.

He sat down at the table and spread out the weekly newspaper from the shiretown.

For a little while longer Debbie and Gid talked by the fire. A piece of wood in the stove broke and fell. Lower Archie's paper rustled as he turned the pages.

"Ay, Gid," he said suddenly. "If it's a good day at all we'll do well to go to the shiretown tomorrow. I see where the fishery officer's leaving the end of the week for Ottawa. You'll tell Upper Archie that."

Gid stood up.

"I'll not forget to tell him," he promised.

Debbie walked with him to the door. They stood for a moment on the step.

"See, Debbie," exclaimed Gid. "Northern lights!"

They watched the pale columns of light climb the sky above the shadow of the woods.

"Come out the door, Father, and see the northern lights," called Debbie.

Lower Archie came out and stood beside them.

"Ay, it'll be a good day after all," he commented.

Below the fish house the tide sucked in its endless rhythm. They could hear it gently slapping against the sides of the dinghy. Across the dark canopy above them the milky way was flung in long splen-

dor, and up from the horizon the shifting northern lights shot higher and higher.

The cold fall wind swept across the woods and fields. Debbie turned with a shiver to the lighted doorway behind them.

"You'll be down tomorrow with Uncle Archie, Gid?"

"Ay, Debbie. We'll wave them good-bye."

She watched him round the corner of the house into the lane, then turned back into the kitchen.

Lower Archie had folded his newspaper and was taking off his steel-rimmed spectacles. The kerosene lamp on the table threw its unshaded glare into his face, and above his white beard Debbie noticed the deep etched lines of weariness. With an unaccustomed gesture of affection she crossed the room and laid her cheek against his shoulder.

"You should be having a good sleep tonight, for there's a long day ahead," she said.

"Ay, Debbie. A long day. We'll be up before daylight if we're to catch the tide."

His hand rested a moment on her red-gold braids.

"After all, there's little need for you to go," she said. "It's Upper Archie who's concerned. He and Middle Archie could go by themselves, I'm thinking."

"It's all the MacQuarries who are concerned,

Debbie lass—you most of all." He straightened his stooping shoulders and smiled kindly at her troubled tone.

"There, Debbie lass. Don't be troubled. With soft weather on the way it'll be a fine trip across to the shiretown. We're needing things from the stores to do us over the winter, too. Would you like me to be bringing you something pretty, Debbie?"

It was the phrase he had used when she was a little girl. She smiled.

"Something pretty? You might be bringing me a canvas with a pattern of roses to work into a rug against my marriage day——"

"I'll bring you the finest pattern in the town, Debbie lass."

As Debbie filled the tea kettle for morning and Lower Archie dipped into the bucket for his drink of cold water their talk was of happy little things. But before they took their lamps upstairs, Lower Archie spoke again of the trip to the shiretown.

"We'll be home early, I'm thinking, and if I'm tired from a good day's work, I'll sleep the better for it."

With his lamp in his hand, he disappeared through the door. Debbie wound the clock, closed the draughts on the stove and a moment later took her own lamp upstairs.

In the hour before dawn the kitchen of the lower farm was again warm with lamp-light. In its yellow circle Lower Archie and Debbie sat down for their early breakfast. It heightened with shadow the firm curve of Debbie's cheek below her gleaming braids, and touched Lower Archie's bent gray head as they asked the blessing of God on the food and on the day before them.

Hardly had the creeping daylight turned the glowing kitchen to gray, when Middle Archie tramped in. After him came Upper Archie and Gid.

"You'll have a bite before you leave," offered Lower Archie.

"We're not long up from the table," refused Middle Archie with his hands held out to the fire and his cheeks aglow with the cold.

"When the lad and I stopped at the middle farm, Janet would not hear of us leaving till we'd had a fine breakfast," Upper Archie explained.

Lower Archie drained his cup and arose.

"Then we'll be on our way," he said briefly.

Debbie slipped into her coat and with Gid beside her followed them down to the shore. The pasture was white with frost and the ground was hard beneath their feet.

"It'll warm up when the sun comes up," said Middle Archie hopefully.

"Ay, it's a good day, I'm thinking," Lower Archie agreed.

"It's a good day that'll see this trouble settled," remarked Upper Archie.

"When we're home from this trip, I'll be hauling up the boats, for it'll not be long till the ice comes in," Lower Archie said as he released the painter of the dinghy.

Already thin ice covered the rock pools near by. The sting of winter was in the air.

"Mind the pattern of roses you're bringing me," cried Debbie gaily as Middle Archie took the oars and pulled toward the power boat at the mooring.

"The finest pattern in the town," promised Lower Archie as the strip of water widened.

Debbie and Gid watched them climb aboard the power boat and head across the bay.

"It's a bad time of year to be crossing the bay," said Debbie in a worried tone.

"It's a fine morning, Debbie," protested Gid.

She was silent.

"Why, Debbie, there's nothing to fear. I'd not have you troubled so—" He looked in surprise at the tears in her gray eyes and put his arm around her comfortingly.

"I don't know what it is that's troubling me so," she admitted. "It's only that father looked tired

last night, and old—and I took a notion he should be staying at home. . . ."

The steady beat of the engine was softened by distance when they turned back to the farm house.

"I'll see that the horse and cow are watered," offered Gid, as they approached the barn.

"That would be a fine help to me, Gid lad," said Debbie. The gray eyes smiled again with their old serenity.

She pushed open the kitchen door and hung her coat on its nail. Before she started to gather the breakfast dishes she blew out the lamp, still burning pallidly in the sharp daylight.

XI

DEBBIE stood at the kitchen window looking over the ledges toward Letete. The tide had turned and between the lines of rockweed the channel was widening. But there was no sign of the three Archies coming home from the shiretown.

All through that day of cold sunlight Gid had stayed at the lower farm, discovering small tasks for himself around the barn and the fish house. At noon Debbie had spread the red cloth on the kitchen table and they had eaten their dinner together.

The sun had hardly started down the sky when two girls from the settlement came up for a visit with Debbie. Over their sewing they spent a merry hour close to the warmth of the stove. Debbie was knitting socks for Lower Archie, and Gid clumsily held the skein of gray yarn as she wound it into a firm ball. It was an hour full of good-natured teasing as the girls talked of Debbie's coming marriage and forecast other weddings among the young folk of Harbor By Chance before a year was gone.

When they started back toward the settlement Debbie and Gid walked with them as far as the

kirk. Then waving good-bye, they started back to the lower farm.

The pale sun was already low over the Bocabec Hills and as they came out of the woods near the rocky pasture, it sank from sight into a bank of gray cloud.

A crow flew cawing across the wide expanse of brown stubble and alighted in a bare birch near the road.

" 'One crow, sorrow,' " quoted Debbie.

A moment later another crow flew heavily across the pasture.

" 'Two crows, joy,' " Gid added, laughing.

"The other came just in time," said Debbie, laughing with him. "I'm not sure even so that they were close enough together. It's two sorrows, it may be."

" 'Three crows, marriage,' " cried Gid triumphantly as the third bird lighted on the birch. "It must have been joy, Debbie."

"Ay, Gid," she agreed. "Of course it's joy."

She slipped her arm through his and they laughed together as a great flock of crows lifted from the far end of the rocky pasture and circled with harsh cries.

"Too many to count!" Gid decided.

"All the joys in the world," pronounced Debbie.

They left the clearing behind. A few minutes later they were at the lower farm.

"I'll see to the horse and cow," Gid said as he turned with Debbie into the lane.

"But you'll be staying for a bite of supper, Gid lad," Debbie insisted. "They'll be home soon. Upper Archie too must be having his supper here."

"Your father'll put Uncle Archie in at the upper farm," Gid decided. "I'd best build the fire and be ready when he comes."

Together they turned into the barn. Gid led the horse out of the wide doors and down below the milk house to the brook. Behind him came Debbie, driving the cow before her. They watched them drink noisily of the cold water and when they had their fill drove them back into their stalls.

In a few moments Debbie was alone again, busy with preparations for supper.

Humming she moved with swift light movements about the kitchen, laying the red cloth, setting the places for herself and her father. She paused to look out over the choppy bay. Gray clouds, sprung up suddenly in the last hour, were beating across the sky. The early twilight of November blurred the brown pastures and the edge of fir beyond.

She searched the leaden stretches of the bay for

a sign of the boat which had set out from the lower farm that morning. But as far as she could see there was no movement save the leaping of the white-caps.

The laughter which had been in her eyes that afternoon had fled, and her face was grave as she looked at the clock on the shelf.

The three Archies, she argued with herself, knew every ledge and current coming through Letete. Even if they left the shiretown too late to make the passage they could put in to Bocabec or Digdeguash for the night. In any case they would be safe, and if they were coming through Letete, they would be home within the hour.

She peeped into the oven, letting the warm odor of baking beans steal through the kitchen. Baked beans, sweet cake made from molasses, cranberries —all would be ready when they arrived.

She sat down beside the window to wait. Darkness thickened in the snug kitchen. Night shut in.

The black square of the window was cut by a broken line of red where the glow crept through the open draught of the range and reached warm fingers toward the window, lighting witch's fires in the dark.

Debbie pressed her face against the cold pane. The night was thick around the farm house.

She reached at last for the lamp on the shelf. As she struck a match shadows flickered about the kitchen. The ragged sheet of flame along the wick steadied as the glass chimney settled into place with a click. A soft glow fell on the red cloth and the rag rug.

Debbie shoved more wood into the stove, and sat down alone to her supper. Like as not her father had put into Bocabec when he saw it was blowing up for a storm.

It was while she was eating her supper that the great wind came. She heard it whistle about the corner of the house and rise to a scream of fury. She felt the house shake with the mighty strength of its attack.

"The storm has struck. God help them now! God help them now!" cried Debbie as she sprang to her feet.

Her gray eyes were wide with fright as she listened to the wind scream over the lower farm. Her head was bowed before it.

She lifted her head bravely at last. Perhaps her father had not started from the shiretown at all, knowing, as he and all the men of the islands knew, the treachery of Letete passage.

She cleared away her dishes, leaving her father's place untouched. Sitting down beside the table, she

opened her Bible. She remembered that she had not read that day.

She turned the pages of the worn book to the "Peace, be still," that quieted the storm on Galilee. But as she read the wind rose higher, roaring over the little group of buildings beside the bay in great smashing gusts. She closed the book and stood again beside the window, trying to pierce the windy darkness. A few snowflakes pasted themselves to the pane. In the stove another piece of driftwood broke and fell. The glowing little kitchen was still again.

And over it the wind crashed.

Debbie, standing white-faced by the window, thought that she had never known a storm of such fury as the one which had just broken over the islands and shores of the Passamaquoddy.

"God help them now," she repeated as the gale howled about the lower farm house.

Above the roar of the storm she heard a splintering crash, and knew that the fish house on the point had gone.

The house itself rocked in the grip of the wind. The world was a shrieking madness.

"God help them now!"

The minute hand of the clock on the shelf crept slowly around its course. Debbie walked helplessly back and forth in the lamp-lighted kitchen. She

thought the wind was dying down a little at last, and picked up her knitting. The needles clicked a few minutes as she worked on the gray sock. But again the wind rose in screaming fury and she put her knitting down.

Minute after minute ticked away as she waited, until finally the unleashed strength of the storm seemed tamed and the snow came on the steady drive of the gale.

Peering through the window, Debbie tried in vain to see if the barn still stood.

She pulled on her coat and woollen cap. From the shelf where the bucket of spring water stood, she took a lantern and lighted it. Then she slipped through the door into the black wind.

The snow blinded her as she struggled toward the barn. The wind tore at her coat, nearly lifting her from her feet. A shingle from the roof of the barn ripped off and blew past her. Then she felt the bolt of the great door in her hand and pulled it open enough to let her enter the shadowy building.

She set the lantern on the floor and crossed to the stalls. The horse was tossing his head with terror. The cow, munching placidly, rolled a worried eye at Debbie.

She rubbed the cow's nose soothingly, glad of even her silent companionship.

"We mustn't be fearing," she remarked sternly to the cow. Her voice sounded small and strained as it lost itself among the shadows.

"If only Gid would come," she said forlornly to the horse, rubbing his nose and patting his twitching shoulder.

She could see the horse's breath and her own in the cold air. The smell of cattle, the sweetness of hay in the mow, all the odors of the barn were pungent in her nostrils.

Outside the roar of the wind was unabated.

She picked up her lantern from the floor and as the shadows moved grotesquely behind the buggy with its empty shafts, and behind the leather harness hanging near by, she pulled open the door again, bolted it behind her, and struggled back toward the house.

The snow lashed her face as she bent into the wind. Over the gale she heard the deep warning of the foghorn on the Wolves and knew that the light would be burning steadily there. She thought of the other light at the mouth of the river, and remembered suddenly that someone had said the river light could not be seen until a boat was through Letete.

"But they've put in to Bocabec," she assured herself stoutly.

Steadily the foghorn sounded. She reached the kitchen door, and stumbled into the lamp-lighted kitchen.

When she had shaken the snow from her coat and blown out the lantern, she sat down again at the table with her Bible.

It was thus that Gid saw her as he passed the window—her head bent over the book, the red-gold hair pushed back from her brow, her hands clasped tightly on the table before her, still and intent in the lamp-light.

She started up as she heard his step at the door.

"Father!" she cried.

Then, the door flew open and Gid stood in the black rectangle, his cap low over his eyes and his shoulders white with snow.

"Gid! Oh, Gid lad—I've been wanting you so this night——"

"It's all right, Debbie. Get on your coat. Aunt Janet's waiting for us at the middle farm. This lower farm gets the rake of the wind. . . ."

"But if Father comes——"

Gid clasped her hands tighter.

"Where else would he be looking for you but there, Debbie?"

She turned wordlessly to her coat.

Gid picked up the bucket of spring water, and

began to pour it on the blazing fire. Hissing steam poured into the room.

"If the chimney goes, it's like to burn the house down with a fire in the stove," he explained.

Debbie struggled into her heavy coat and pulled the woolen cap over her ears as she listened to his hurried words.

"I was on my way, Debbie, when the storm broke. I just reached the middle farm. But it's better now, Debbie. We can make it by the road. And you'll be safer there where it's sheltered by the hill——"

They blew out the lamp and plunged again into the roaring night.

Debbie heard the horse neighing in the barn.

"The water's high——"

At Gid's shout she strained her eyes through the dark and the snow. Between the boulders in the pasture, the tide was sucking, whipped higher than the highest spring tide by the fury of the gale.

Past the corner of the house and into the lane they hurried. The bare alders thrashed wildly as they passed. When they reached the bars, Debbie saw that the fence was down. Then their feet found the road, and they were struggling past cleared fields, flung against each other by the levelling wind.

"Falling trees. . . ." Gid shouted. Debbie heard fragments: "In the woods . . . danger. . . ."

Then suddenly they had reached the woods.

Debbie heard the firs beside the road creaking as they bent before the gale. Snow stung her eyes and melted down her cheeks.

They stumbled into a mass of prickly branches. A spruce or hemlock had fallen across the road. They swung to the side and scrambled over the great trunk. Breathless, exhausted, they clung together as the gale thundered overhead. Then shoulder to shoulder, they trudged on through the screeching storm.

Debbie's throat tightened. Her breath came in gasps. Another smashing gust and Gid Wyn's arm, tightening, steadying her. . . . They plunged forward again.

Her eyes were shut now against the cutting snow. On . . . on. . . .

"Stand there . . . don't move away. . . ." She heard Gid's voice above the storm, and then suddenly he was gone. She was alone in the dark and the snow.

The gale screamed above and around her. She braced herself against its driving power.

Then Gid's arm was around her again. They moved forward slowly, until Gid's feet found the

turn into the lane. Another battle with the wind and the snow. . . .

She felt Gid shaking her arm, heard his voice shouting above the storm, "Look! Debbie, look!"

And ahead she saw a lamp set in a window, blazing steadily.

They had reached the middle farm.

XII

ALL that night the wind thundered over the settlements along the Passamaquoddy. All that night Middle Archie's five sons beat up and down the rocky shore with Gid. Snow stung their faces and their pace was slow as they bent into the wind. But through the darkness they searched the lashing water for the boat which had set out from Harbor By Chance that morning.

They searched in every rocky cove. Once Dugal clutched Gid's arm.

"There——" he pointed.

Gid saw a boat pounding to pieces on a jagged point. They climbed over the rockweed with white water swirling about their hip boots. But neither of them had seen the boat before.

"Some man has gone to the bottom tonight," cried Dugal.

"Like as not she was torn from her mooring," Gid replied.

They struggled back to the surer footing of the beach. Spray whipped their faces. The low stunted firs clinging to the rocks at their right bent low

before the gale. The bay, lashed to an angry white, beat the rocks at their left.

They met John and Peter, making good time with the wind at their back. Farther up the shore they knew Donald and Neil were searching the black water and sheltered coves, the dark clumps of seaweed torn loose from their rooted security and rising and falling on the lashing waves.

Gid stepped in front of the younger boy at his side and hurried forward. A black shape was lying at the water's edge, moving a little with the lift of the waves.

He turned back when he found that it was a barnacle covered log.

"The wharves will be down around the Passamaquoddy," he said to Dugal.

On they struggled through the wind and snow. Far away the foghorn moaned.

While Middle Archie's five sons beat up and down the rocky shore with Gid, Debbie sat with Janet MacQuarrie in the warm kitchen and watched the night of wind and terror through.

"I hear the death bell ringing in my ear, Debbie," Janet MacQuarrie said hopelessly.

"It is only the wind whistling by," protested Debbie. "Though many a man will die this night, it's not the death bell you're hearing, Aunt Janet."

"This afternoon a bird flew into the shed. I caught him in my apron and let him fly free. But it was the death bird, I'm thinking, Debbie—the death bird of the MacQuarries."

"It was not the death bird, Aunt Janet. Many a bird flies into the house. It means no more than the swallows nesting on the beams of the barn."

Janet MacQuarrie shook her head and rocked sadly back and forth in her chair beside the kitchen stove.

On the back of the stove stood a brown earthen teapot kept ready for the searchers. Now and then, with the snow melting in little streams down their yellow oilskins, they stamped in to gulp a steaming cup.

Janet MacQuarrie did not stay them with questions. Few questions were there to ask. Stern and silent they went out again to their ceaseless march. Stern and silent she sat beside the stove, waiting.

She forced Debbie to lie down on the kitchen lounge. From the room she carried a pillow and a patchwork quilt.

"Sleep, Debbie," she commanded. "Tonight there is nothing we can do. Sleep, to be strong tomorrow."

For a long time Debbie lay taut and wakeful. At last, spent by the flight through the woods and

the strain of waiting, she felt her tense body relax and slept.

Over the house the wind crashed endlessly.

Janet MacQuarrie rose from her chair beside the stove and carried the lamp into the room. There the MacQuarries of two generations had stood up to be married. There they had been laid to rest at the end of their little day of struggle with the land and the tide of the Passamaquoddy.

Debbie, awakened by the screaming wind, heard her there moving to and fro. But a moment later she dozed again.

The line of light running across the floor and up the wall of the kitchen widened as the door opened and Janet MacQuarrie came out. She put the lamp on the table and sat down by the stove again to wait. The night crept on.

Debbie dreamed fitfully, half awakened by each plunging gust. Now she dreamed that her father and she were home at the lower farm, eating breakfast with the sunlight on the table. Now that with her arms flung wide like the branches of a fir tree she was madly fighting the storm.

And to the thundering gale she woke.

Janet MacQuarrie was still sitting by the stove. The gaunt strength of her face was heightened by lines of weariness. Her lips moved and Debbie knew

that she was praying. Now she could hear the tortured,

"God Almighty . . . God Almighty!"

Debbie too turned her face to the wall and prayed.

The wind still roared over the middle farm. Slack water. Then flood tide. The flood, as Harbor By Chance had learned, might bring home a man Letete had claimed. While the MacQuarrie women waited, the MacQuarrie men beat up and down the shore wearily.

The wrecking gusts came less often. The gale died down to an icy wail around the corners of the middle farm house. Cold and bitter gray, the day broke.

Janet MacQuarrie touched Debbie on the shoulder.

"It is the morning, Debbie," she said. "We must drink our tea and eat a bite."

When they had eaten, Debbie pulled on her coat and her woolen cap. Down to the shore she went and scanned the bay and the jagged rocks. She walked around the point. Driftwood had come ashore in great quantities. The curved gunwale of a boat was thrown high on the rocks. In front of her the water stretched away in a tossing waste, still swept by the dying gale. She could see the

MacQuarrie boys still keeping their storm vigil as they trudged down the beach.

Then slowly she walked back again to the middle farm house.

"I'll be going home, Aunt Janet, for a little. There's the cow to be milked."

On the road to the lower farm the great wind had left its trail. In the woods old trees had fallen. Here one had been caught in the crutch of a stronger neighbor and leaned heavily, half way to earth. There an old spruce lay prostrate, with its roots wrenched from the frozen earth.

She turned into the lane of the lower farm. The cold daylight showed her the wreckage of the fish house strewn in the lower part of the pasture. Driftwood and rockweed stranded among the boulders told of the night's high tide.

She pushed open the kitchen door. The Bible still lay open beside the lamp. Near it was the half knitted sock.

Picking up the milk pail she went out to the barn. The horse whinnied as she shoved open the big door. She shook down some hay for him and for the cow, and as the cow munched it contentedly she pulled up the low stool and started milking.

The barn door stood open to the pasture and the bay, and as Debbie pressed her cheek against the

cow's warm side and with firm fingers sent the milk rattling into the tin pail, she swept the whitecapped distances for sign of the three Archies.

The pail was quickly filled with rich frothy milk. Debbie carried it to the milk house, strained it through cheese cloth and set it on the shelves in shining pans.

She went back to the barn and led first the horse and then the cow to the brook to drink. When they were back in the stalls, she stopped again to look out over the bay. If the three Archies had stayed the night in the shiretown, they might make the crossing now—though even now the tide would be running swift through Letete.

Busy with little tasks, Debbie stayed at the lower farm through the early morning. She built a roaring fire in the stove to take the chill from the kitchen. But the cold wind whistled about the corners of the house and gray clouds marched slowly across the sky. In the hollows of the pasture the snow lay in drifts between brown knolls, swept bare by the wind.

The fire in the stove died down. Debbie closed the draughts and pulled on her coat again. Then shutting the kitchen door behind her, she started back to the middle farm. Perhaps there they had some word of the three Archies.

She passed the cleared fields. The breathing woods were around her. Ahead a fallen tree barred the road.

It was through the screen of spruce boughs that Debbie saw a man trudging slowly along the road.

Her breath caught as she saw the stoop of his shoulders, the bent head. . . .

She scrambled over the fallen tree and ran toward him.

"Uncle Archie!" she called.

He did not hear.

"Uncle Archie!"

There were tears on Debbie's cheek as she overtook him. The night of waiting was over. In her sudden relief she felt very tired.

"My father—where is he?" she asked simply.

The shoulders that had straightened at her call were stooped again. The gladness in Upper Archie's face had faded. His voice was gentle as he answered.

"I had been hoping he was home, Debbie lass."

The wind moaned through the firs. The gray clouds beat in slow majesty against the sky. And Debbie's face was quiet as she walked beside Upper Archie to the middle farm. Her tears were checked. There was only a great silence, only a great emptiness.

Upper Archie's words came from a wind-swept distance.

"They left late in the afternoon, Debbie, did your father and Middle Archie. Now my heart is sore that I wasn't leaving with them then. But I stayed in the shiretown to see to having the law on Tony Luti as the fishery inspector had advised. We had it planned that Middle Archie and your father would go home and that I'd walk over the Bocabec Hills today. So they left alone, Debbie.

"And when I'd seen the sheriff and signed the papers I met John Roberts. So I drove with him as far as Bocabec. The wind came just as we reached his house and I was spending the night there. At daylight when the wind dropped, I started on foot. I've come across the Bocabec Hills, Debbie. For nigh twenty miles I walked on fallen tree trunks and never put my foot to the ground.

"But all the time I was hoping your father had come home, Debbie . . . your father, and Middle Archie."

The gentle voice stopped. They turned into the middle farm. As they approached the house the kitchen door flew open, and Janet MacQuarrie was waiting for them on the step.

"Now may God be praised," she said simply, "for He has heard my prayer."

Upper Archie's head was bowed. He lifted it at her voice.

"I come alone, Janet," he said.

She stood aside silently as he and Debbie entered the kitchen. There he told again of the day in the shiretown.

"They waited until late in the day for me," he said sadly at the end. "If they'd waited longer they would have been missing the tide. So they went alone. We could see it was blowing up for a storm but no man could have been knowing it would break so soon; no man could have been foreseeing a wind like that.

"The storm broke when they were in Letete, I'm fearing, Janet. My heart is heavy this day that it was business of mine that took them to the shiretown. My heart is heavy that I wasn't with them at the end."

He bowed his head in his hands. The kitchen was still.

"It was their day to die," said Janet MacQuarrie at last. "Sore grieved you may be for their death, Archie, but be not reproaching yourself for it this day."

Debbie's face was quiet as she laid food on the table.

"You've walked far since daybreak, Uncle Ar-

chie," she said. "Drink a cup of tea and rest for a little while."

Upper Archie took the food that was put before him and lay down for a moment or two on the kitchen lounge.

"My place is not here, I'm thinking," he said finally. "I'll go down to the shore."

Debbie watched him from the window as he strode down the pasture. She and Janet MacQuarrie spoke but little as the minutes ticked away in the kitchen of the middle farm. Silently they shoved more driftwood into the stove. Silently, when the time came, they sat down together to a frugal meal.

They were at the table when they saw Upper Archie and four of Middle Archie's sons coming up from the beach together.

Upper Archie came alone into the kitchen.

"The room has been made ready, Janet?" he asked quietly.

"Ay, Archie. The room is ready."

He went out again. Debbie saw Middle Archie's four sons stop at the door of the fish house. She saw them come out with two hand-barrows and turn back toward the beach.

Wordlessly the women waited in the kitchen. They saw them come again over the hill from the

beach carrying the two hand-barrows like stretchers, heavily.

And the bodies of Middle Archie and Lower Archie were borne past them into the room.

XIII

THE great gale blew in a winter of bitter cold, a winter of deep snows and deep black ice on the rivers. For the first time in Janet MacQuarrie's memory Harbor By Chance was rough with ice far out beyond the lighthouse.

No smoke rose from the chimney of the lower farmhouse. It stood amid white fields, bleak and deserted, while on the middle farm Debbie waited for spring.

"With the spring I'll be going with Gid to the island," she said one day. "But I'll not be forgetting, Aunt Janet, that it's a mother you've been to me this winter."

"I've thanked God many a time for my five strong sons, Debbie," Janet MacQuarrie replied. "But my heart would have been glad for a daughter and it's a daughter you've been to me."

Without Debbie, Janet MacQuarrie's days would have been lonely on the middle farm now that Middle Archie's jovial voice was stilled. John and Donald, soon after the great gale, had gone up river to the lumber camp in the deep woods, where the

first growth was falling before the axe. Now when Peter and Neil started each morning with a jingle of sleigh bells for the store at Harbor By Chance, only Dugal remained to do the chores about the farm.

Janet MacQuarrie was very tender with her youngest son in these sad days. She wished him near her during the long afternoons when she and Debbie sewed beside the kitchen stove. She would rock silently back and forth, listening to their talk of the young folk at Harbor By Chance.

Debbie's fingers were always busy with socks for Gid, or a muffler for Upper Archie.

"I had thought to be making a rug for my wedding day," she said. "But I've little heart for it now."

Upper Archie had told her, on one of his visits to the middle farm, that her father's last thought before leaving the shiretown on the day of the great gale had been the pattern of roses for which Debbie had asked. He had selected it carefully and had tucked it in his pocket as he went down to the wharf.

"It's a pretty thing that Debbie will be liking," he had said to Upper Archie.

Upper Archie's head was bent now. His age had come upon him suddenly with the sadness of his

heart. Though the twinkle of his kindly gray eyes was not dimmed, his gray head was bent and his step was slow.

"The heavy work of a weir is not for him," Gid told Debbie one day in a worried tone. "He spoke one day last summer of building another weir for himself after he gave us the Thumbcap. But I'm thinking he'll not be able to seine a weir again, Debbie."

"There's no need that he should ever be seining again, Gid lad. He's earned his day of rest, I'm thinking."

"I was telling him that very thing, Debbie. I was telling him that the Thumbcap Weir would stock enough for the three of us."

They were standing on the road below the middle farm. Around them the woods lay deep and still except for the distant crack of a woodsman's axe and the chatter of a red squirrel watching them with beady eyes. The fir boughs bent low under their weight of snow. The keen fragrance of the firs was all about them.

"The weir stocked a fine lot last fall, Debbie," Gid said. "If only we could keep it from going down this winter, we'd have plenty to start on when we're married."

He watched the chattering squirrel gloomily.

"We let the racks down and took all the sticking brush out, and we drove some hardwood stakes to see if we could keep her standing. But when the heavy ice goes out, I'm fearing the weir will go too, Debbie. It will make it come hard on us in the spring with all the building to do over."

"But there's the upper and lower farms to cut the weir stuff off, Gid lad," encouraged Debbie. "We can build again."

"Ay, Debbie, we can build again. But I'd not have it come hard on you with hard times the first year we're married."

Debbie's gray eyes were serene under her woolen cap.

"There'll always be food, I'm thinking, with all the fish in the Passamaquoddy. We can have a garden on the island besides, Gid. There'll be enough for Uncle Archie and for you and me."

The squirrel leaped chattering from branch to branch, following them down the road.

"There may be a good run of herring this year," Debbie added. "With a good run, we'll pay for rebuilding the weir, Gid lad. It will come right. I'm sure of that."

He turned to her with a low exclamation.

"Bless you, Debbie. . . . When we're married it'll all come right, always!"

He kissed her while the squirrel chattered emphatically.

"You're always so quiet, so sure, Debbie. You put heart into me, into everybody."

Debbie's gray eyes were bright with happiness when she and Gid came into the kitchen of the middle farm where Janet MacQuarrie was waiting.

On Sabbath evenings, when the minister came down river to hold service in the kirk at Harbor By Chance, the MacQuarries from the middle farm climbed into their sleigh and sped over the roads to the settlement.

The gray house across the fields from the kirk was lighted then, and often the lilting music of young Tony Luti's fiddle came merrily across the snow.

"It's little I'm caring for sending old Tony to jail now," Upper Archie said when the day came when he and Gid were to start for the shiretown to the trial. "But Middle Archie and Lower Archie were the ones that urged me to see justice done. And Gid and Debbie are the ones that will benefit by it."

So they started off behind the horses which had been Lower Archie's, for the trip to the shiretown. Debbie saw that the rug was tucked firmly about their knees and heated bricks were at their feet. Then over the snowy roads they sped, the sad Scots-

man with the gray bent head, and the straight dark lad beside him.

Up river they would pick up Robert Duncan, who had seen Tony's boat drawn up on the Thumbcap the night the sheep were killed.

Janet MacQuarrie and Debbie waited anxiously for word from the shiretown for four days. On the fifth day Upper Archie and Gid came back.

Gid told them the story of the trial, told them of the testimony of Robert Duncan, and of how Angus Duncan, his father, had come to tell of Tony Luti's threats.

They heard from Gid, and from Angus Duncan too, of Upper Archie's plea for mercy at the end, a plea which had made the sentence short for the black-bearded man on trial.

"I'd not be a hard man," Upper Archie explained to Janet MacQuarrie.

"There's none who'll say you've done a deed in your life but out of the kindness of your heart, Archie MacQuarrie," Janet assured him. "They'd not have called you a hard man this time, I'm thinking."

She spoke no word of reproof, however, and Upper Archie found no disapproval among those he met at Harbor By Chance.

"He was always a kindly man," they said, when

he was not there to hear. "Now he's sore at heart for his cousins' sakes who came to their death through this. If he'll settle it so, there's no need to say to him that he's done wrong."

He met with understanding again when he spoke to John and Donald in the store.

"I'd not be wanting their flour barrel to be empty," he said. "If Liz Luti and her mother have need for anything, see that you supply it. And if it means a loss to you, I'll find a way of settling for it."

John, in his father's place behind the counter, answered for them both.

"My father never let a flour barrel in Harbor By Chance stay empty," he said. "And there's still the MacQuarrie name over the door."

The gentle Scotsman nodded approvingly.

"And still a MacQuarrie at the counter," he said as he went out.

One afternoon in midwinter the young folk drove up to fresh water and went sleighing on the river. They spun swiftly over the black ice. Through the still air the icy tinkle of their sleigh bells danced across the snowy fields. They reached a stretch of open water and turned back.

Then in the red sunset they skated, veering back and forth on the broad expanse of the river above

the falls. Gid held Debbie's mittened hands firmly. The wind of their swift passing blew by their ears. And the early dark was falling as they took off their skates and went up the road in a gay group for supper with a family who had moved up river from Harbor By Chance. Later came the star-lit drive through the woods to the lighted kitchen of the middle farm.

Days there were of driving snow and screaming wind when the middle farm was lonely as when the first Archie MacQuarrie had cleared the farm on the Fundy.

Then Debbie sewed white linen, and worked on bright quilts against the day when she would be married.

So the white weeks passed.

It was late in the winter when Gid went into the woods to get out his weir stuff—ribbons of slim young fir and spruce and hardwood stakes of yellow birch.

Debbie waited for him one day at the foot of the old logging road on the upper farm, waited in the brittle silence for the crunching of horses' hoofs on the snow and the creak of the laden sled.

To her came Gid, walking beside his sled to lighten the load. They turned into the main road toward the lower farm. A wind moved across the

treetops with a lonely crying. Debbie walked closer to Gid.

"It's a strange fear, Gid," she said, "that the wind in the woods brings me. When I was a little thing picking meadowsweet and wild roses down by the river, the wind would come like that and I'd run back to the road."

"It's the gale that makes the fear in your heart now, Debbie. But it's all over and done with. And after so much bitterness, there must be a bit of joy. . . ."

It was Gid's turn to be confident. Debbie lifted her head.

"Ay, Gid. Joy for a little while. It must be."

They were going down hill now. The horses strained back against their load, swaying from side to side of the road to make the grade less steep. Gid still walked with Debbie.

They turned in at the lower farm and drove past the deserted house to the shore. There the logs were piled, until the ice went out and they could be taken off on a scow to the island to be driven into the green tide.

On the way home, Gid and Debbie rode side by side on the sled. Past the clearings and into the still woods they drove. The spruce, which had lain across the road after the great gale, had been swung aside

and now lay in the snow with its spills already brown and brittle.

As they passed the fallen spruce Gid pulled up sharply. In the road ahead a moose stood with his antlers lowered. A moment he watched them, then turned, ran along the road for a little way and crashed off into the woods.

They drove on through the blue-white dusk to the middle farm.

The winter passed and in the spring the freshets came with angry crashing waters.

Over the low intervale land above the falls they spread and plunged over the falls to the salt water, roaring down between eight miles of high fir-dotted cliffs to the bay. When the water began to rise, the three MacQuarrie boys at the middle farm helped Gid roll back his weir stuff from the river's edge, and the ribbons and stakes for the Thumbcap Weir were saved.

The island weirs had been ground to pieces by the heavy ice. The river weirs went down before the torrent. The Passamaquoddy fishermen came to the opening of the season with all they owned destroyed.

Janet MacQuarrie's eyes were sad as she moved about the kitchen of the middle farm.

With the coming of spring came the rebuilding

of the Passamaquoddy weirs. John and Donald were back from the lumber camp only a few days when they began the work on the Herring Cove Weir. Peter went to the island with Gid to help him on the Thumbcap.

On the upper and middle farms the days brought the spring planting.

And the apple trees were in blossom.

"It's no use, Aunt Janet," Debbie said one day when the last stitch had gone into the making of the white muslin dress for her wedding day. "I cannot be married in the room. I'd see my father's coffin standing there, and it's weeping instead of laughing I'd be on my wedding day. I'll be married in the kirk, and we'll come back here for the supper."

So it was in the kirk that Debbie and Gid stood up to be married. Apple blossoms were banked in front of the pulpit. The wet gold sunlight of May lay across Debbie's red-gold braids in the earnest moments of the ceremony.

In the pews behind them most of Harbor By Chance was sitting and when Debbie and Gid had walked to the door of the kirk they were followed by a happy crowd who came in buggies and on foot to the middle farm for supper.

Lish Penny was there, with his gray head bent

over his cane, his hand cupped behind his ear, and his eyes protruding from many years of peering into the green tide for fish. It was seldom now that he saw his friends at Harbor By Chance, for he had given up at last the fight with the wind and tide of the Fundy and had gone up river to the poor-house. But even Lish Penny had found a way to cover the miles to Harbor By Chance on Gid's and Debbie's wedding day.

"You deserve your bit of gladness, Gid," he said. "It's well I remember when you were in the poor-house—a wee toddling thing. He's a good lad, Debbie, and it's a good lot of luck I hope you'll be having. Though there's little luck, I'm thinking, ever comes to the Passamaquoddy."

The Duncans were there—Angus Duncan and Mrs. Duncan with him, and Robert, their son. Andrew Duncan only was missing, for he who for a year had been crippled with rheumatism was again tending his weir on the White Head.

"But he's wishing you joy from his heart, Debbie, like the rest of us," Mrs. Duncan said.

The table was spread again and again with chicken, and young roasted lamb, pies, preserves and cakes.

In the height of the gaiety Liz Luti and young Tony appeared in the doorway.

Janet MacQuarrie crossed the room to greet her. On that wedding day all enmities had been laid aside.

Liz referred to the day of the trial.

"Upper Archie was telling us to be sure and come to him if we needed a meal," she said, looking across to the gray gentle man, deep in conversation with Angus Duncan.

Debbie, too, greeted her quietly, and Gid, though silent, shook her hand at Debbie's word.

With laughter and merriment the late afternoon slipped away. At last Debbie and Gid prepared to leave for the island camp. The boat had been left at the wharf so that they might wait until the last moment and still catch the tide.

Debbie kissed Janet MacQuarrie as Gid took the horse and buggy out of the wide barn doors. She kissed Upper Archie too, before she climbed up behind the horse.

"It'll be to the upper farm that we'll come home," she told him.

"Gid has brought me many joys, Debbie lass, and this will be the greatest of them all," he replied gently.

The others were already driving down the lane, when Gid and Debbie started. Behind the granite hills the sun was sinking into clouded banks of pur-

ple and gold as they drove out of the woods, past the kirk, and down the hill to the wharf.

There Peter MacQuarrie took the reins from Gid. He and Debbie climbed down the long slimy ladder to the boat which rocked against the piling of the wharf at each lift of the waves. Gid bent to start the engine. The group at the top of the ladder waved good-bye.

And they moved out of the shadow of the wharf into the green-lit harbor.

XIV

BACK and forth they followed the twisting channel. On both sides were the ledges covered with brown rockweed, and the soft waving of the kelp beneath the surface of the water. Now the brush topmasts of a weir sent broken shadows into the green tide.

"It's long I've been wanting to take you home to the island, Debbie," said Gid.

"And it's long I've been wanting to come, Gid," replied Debbie softly.

They spoke little as the boat chugged into the open bay. Debbie pulled her coat more closely about her in the face of the cold salt wind. Gid sat content beside her with his hand on the tiller.

Behind them the lights of Harbor By Chance came out one by one. The gold of the sunset paled to dark, and evening smoked the Bocabec Hills.

One after another the dark masses of the islands slipped by. The abrupt cliffs of Little Letete, rising from the swift tides of Letete Passage, were left behind. Ahead of them were the rolling sheep-cropped contours of the White Horse. As they

passed they heard the cry of the sheep pastured there.

Then the White Horse slipped by with the rushing black water. They heard the surf breaking on the ledges of Man o' War Island, where long years before an English battleship had grounded in a Fundy fog. Now the ledges of Man o' War Island were behind them, and the low sandy Spectacles were visible through the star-pale night. The Spectacles, too, were lost in the dark distance. Across the water a lighted window gleamed.

"That will be Andrew Duncan on the White Head," said Gid. "He and Angus were building a weir on the Head last week. They'll be tending it together, and Robert will be sharing their camp while he helps tend the Thumbcap with me."

"They'll be good neighbors, the Duncans," said Debbie. "They'll be our nearest neighbors, won't they, Gid?"

"Except for the silent folk on Hardwood Island, Debbie."

The fog was shutting in, leaving them in a little world of their own. The black water washed past the gunwale as they threaded their way among the islands of the Passamaquoddy.

They were conscious of a quiet warmth after the cold wind from the open bay, and the sudden scent

of alder and moist earth breathed through the fog, as they passed to the leeward of the Nub.

Then the keen spiced fragrance of Spruce Island pricked the sweetness. The wind was again in their faces. They chugged past Hardwood Island where the dead of the islands lay. The graveyard was seldom visited, Debbie knew. Some of the mounds above the stunted firs were marked by lichen-covered headstones, and some blanketed only by moss or white wood sorrel. It was lonely there and gray, the sheep the sole inhabitants of the island, the sheep and the sleeping fishermen on the side of the hill.

Through the channel they slipped, past the rocky Thumbcap and into Deadman's Harbor. The great seine rack towered for a moment beside them. Ahead the jagged face of the mountain loomed. The engine stopped and they glided toward the mooring.

In the next moment the dinghy was along side. As they rowed ashore there was no sound in the great silence of the bay except the creak of the thole-pins, the dip of the oars and the quiet lap of water against the sides.

When the keel scraped on the beach, Gid jumped out. Then lifting Debbie in his arms, he carried her to the rocky beach.

"I wanted to lift you ashore in my arms, Debbie," he said. "I would not have you getting your wedding shoes wet."

He put her down carefully. She steadied herself for a moment on the slippery rockweed, and waited for him to make the painter fast. Then with the tips of the rockweed bursting beneath them at each step, they walked up the beach.

The fog blurred the mass of the mountain at their side and the square camp ahead. In a moment their feet touched the spongy turf, clipped short by the sheep. Debbie's hand was pricked by the bough of some stunted fir or spruce. Then Gid flung open the door of the camp.

A match spurted, filling the interior with flickering shadows. Gid found the lamp, touched the match to the wick, and adjusted the chimney with a little click. The light flooded warmly over the room.

Debbie saw the stove, blacked and polished, the table with a red cloth under the window, the bunks one above the other, and in one corner a litter of trawls, hooks and fishing tackle.

On the table in a cracked cup were white and purple violets, picked, as Gid explained later, on the mountain side near the spring.

Now he watched her anxiously.

"It is not much, Debbie," he said hesitantly.

Debbie turned to him quickly.

"It's our very own home, Gid dear lad, and I'm near crying for the happiness that's in me."

Her eyes were bright indeed as Gid held her in his arms.

In a moment she hung her hat and her long coat on the hooks beside the door. Still in the white muslin dress in which she had stood beside Gid that afternoon in the kirk to be married, she stood now for a moment at the door, with the lamp-light on her coiled braids. About the creamy oval of her face were curled tendrils of red gold, damp with the fog.

She closed the door of the camp, and turned again to Gid.

The muffled note of the foghorn sounded still through the little camp under the mountain.

The next morning Debbie went about the camp on the island singing. She sang as she opened the door to the cool spring morning and emptied the dish water. She sang as she watched the bubbling channels weave a brief pattern on the grass.

The sun was just swinging above the horizon, a swollen red ball burning through the fog. Hardwood Island was only a shadowed bulk, and the islands beyond still lay invisible. Invisible too was the Thumbcap Weir across the ledges. She knew

that soon she would be hearing the creak of Gid's oars in the thole-pins as he rowed back into the island-sheltered harbor with news of the day's catch.

As she swept out the camp she planned little changes here and there: some dotted curtains at the window; a cloth of unbleached linen for the table; a baking pan for the pollock and the haddock Gid would be catching in the Race. The next time they ran in to Harbor By Chance she would get these things from the lower farm.

She looked out again across the close-cropped turf sloping to the water's edge. Veiled in fog the seine-rack floated in the harbor. At the mooring she could see the power boat riding with the tide. Rock-ribbed and mantled in fir, the mountain pushed through the fog above the camp.

Debbie's eye dwelt upon the row of willows at the foot of the mountain. Near the willows they could have a garden with green beans and peas and a bed of radishes. It would be a cosy home that would be theirs on the island.

As she stood at the door a flock of sheep came out of the woods on the side of the mountain and went picking their way down a rocky path to the grassy slope at the water's edge. She heard the grating Ba-a-a of the black ram as he paused near the camp.

"Ba-a-a," she mocked gaily and turned again into the camp, singing.

Gid would have to build a fence about the garden to keep the sheep away.

She polished the chimney of the kerosene lamp and trimmed the red flannel wick. At last she looked about her with satisfaction. The little camp was clean and tidy.

She went out again into the sunshine, bareheaded and coatless. The cool touch of the morning was on her cheek and on her throat. The sunlight flamed on her gleaming braids.

Over the stretch of green grass to the rocky point jutting out into the harbor she walked. On the point two or three squat firs, stunted by the salt winds of the Fundy, held fast to the hard earth at their roots. In the rock pools were vivid green sea-weeds, pale barnacles and pink star-fish. Farther out, brown rockweed clambered over the rocks still wet with the tide.

Debbie kept on to the end of the point until the water slapped the rocks at her feet.

The fog was lifting and over the glinting harbor she saw Gid rowing homeward. When he reached the pebbly beach near the point, she was waiting for him there.

"There was no luck today, Debbie," he said as he

pulled the dinghy up. "Just a few tubs. I wasn't even putting the drop-net on."

He walked beside Debbie to the camp. His black hair was damp with the fog. His happiness glowed in his face.

"But I'd not be taking the time today to go to White Head for Robert Duncan to help with the seining. I'd not take the time even for the seining, Debbie, on the first day you're here on the island with me."

"And I, Gid—I've been watching for you since you rowed over to the weir. I'd not lose a minute of the day."

Together that morning they climbed the mountain, following the sheep paths slippery with fir spills up past the cold spring that trickled from the rocks above the camp, up through green shadowed woods rich with the fragrance of the spring.

They reached the bald top of sandstone, carved with the initials of the Passamaquoddy fishermen of many years ago. In the warm blaze of sun, higher now in its blue arc, they fingered the dates and names carved there, and knew that those who had carved them lay sleeping in the hillside graveyard across the harbor. Debbie and Gid, through idle moments, took loose stones and deepened those weathered inscriptions on the mountain top.

They wandered down the other side of the mountain, still following the sheep paths to the stretch of green turf at its foot. There a grove of silver birch, all in new leaf, glittered in the fragile green of May.

The steep slope urged their feet faster and faster until they were running hand in hand across the green turf between the gleaming trunks of the birches.

Suddenly they reached the cliff and came to a breathless stop. Behind them was the voice of a thin wind in the birches. Before them the long heaving rollers of the Bay of Fundy rose and fell and crashed in curling foam against the high jagged face of rock.

They followed the edge of the cliff until Gid found a steep path down to the water's edge. At its foot they looked up the sharp-hewn face of rock to the fringe of cropped turf at its crest, and the green movement of the birches beyond.

"Now I'll show you the cave, Debbie, that I found when I was only a lad here on the island with Uncle Archie."

Gid's dark eyes were aglow with delight as he led the slim girl beside him along the base of the cliff. Still hand in hand they walked with gay laughter.

They were climbing up again now, half way up the cliff. Stunted firs clung stoutly here and there. Gid pushed aside the prickly branches of one and dropping on his knees crawled through an opening. Debbie followed him.

"There, Debbie! It's a pirate's cave maybe, or a smuggler's cave anyway."

They laughed together as they sat there. They could hear the slow breaking of waves far away.

Then out into the sunlight, past the stunted fir and down the abrupt face of the cliff they scrambled again. Debbie sang as they swung along the edge of the beach.

"For it's a holiday happiness that's in me," she said to Gid.

They rounded the end of the island and stepped gaily over rockweed and salt pools. They stopped to watch the groping barnacles, and when from a cluster of alders a redstart flew, somersaulting in the sun, they climbed over fallen slabs of rock to look for his nest among the fragrant leaves.

They stepped again into the dimness of the woods shot with yellow sunlight. Their feet sank deep into cool wet moss. Above them a black-throated green warbler fluttered from branch to branch of a great fir.

They rounded the shoulder of the mountain and

struck another sheep path. Snapping off dry branches, Gid led the way. They came upon the sheep, huddled timidly together as they approached, and watched their startled flight.

Suddenly they came out beside the spring above the camp. The cool trickle of water across the rock sounded faintly and all about them was the sweetness of violets, frail purple and white on the damp earth.

They found a clump of alders and took their green leaves for cups. A few drops at a time, they tasted the cold water.

Then down the path to the camp they went. It was not yet noon, and Gid took the power boat and chugged out to the Race where the boats of the line fishermen were riding. It was not long before he came back with a haddock of his own and cleaned it on the beach.

He brought it up to Debbie, and in the camp they had their first dinner of boiled haddock and potatoes.

In the afternoon a sudden shower came in slanting silver across the harbor. It passed quickly, leaving the turf more vividly green, leaving the sky more vividly blue.

Before evening came, Debbie had crossed the island with Gid from the rocky cliffs where the

rollers of the Fundy growled everlastingly, to the sheltered green slope beside the harbor where stood the camp. She had gone the length of the island from the long point which looked to the States, to the point at the other end, which at low tide reached in rockweed-covered ledges to the Thumbcap. She had rowed across with Gid to the Thumbcap itself to see the hollow where the dead sheep had been found the summer before.

When at last the great salmon clouds of sunset were brushed across the blue, and the wheeling swallows circled above the cliffs on the mountain side, Debbie and Gid came back to the camp.

"It's a fair home that's ours, Gid," said Debbie. "There's no fairer spot in the county, I'm thinking, or in the world itself."

"It's fairer than before, because you're here, Debbie," said Gid earnestly.

They lighted the lamp while they ate their supper with the red table-cloth between them. The night fog shut in the island and the camp with a blanket of warmth and quiet.

"But it's enough, Gid, that you are here," said Debbie, content.

"It was on my mind for a long time, Debbie, that you might be lonely here. I'd not have you lonely."

"I'll not be lonely, Gid lad."

Gid tended the weir alone tide after tide, rowing out at slack water to scan the depths of green water for herring. Often he returned without putting the drop-net on the mouth of the weir.

"The sardine boats are there waiting for the catch," he told Debbie. "But little good it is to have the boats waiting, and the Eastport canneries whistling 'fish here,' when the fish stay outside the bay."

Then would come a morning when Gid would see streaks of silver slipping through the water and put the drop-net on.

"There are herring in the weir today, Debbie," he would call to Debbie as he rowed back into the harbor. Taking the power boat from the mooring he would start for White Head to get Robert Duncan.

Robert Duncan had consented readily to help tend the Thumbcap Weir. With his uncle and his father tending the White Head Weir, there was little need for Robert there. And living with them in the camp on White Head, he had but a short run to the Thumbcap.

"That's the best of it, Debbie," Gid said with satisfaction. "For we'd not want to build another camp for him, and it's plain there's no room for him here."

So together Gid Wyn and Robert Duncan seined the Thumbcap Weir. The sardine boats waiting for the catch would take their load of herring back to the canneries. Then through another day Gid and Debbie would be alone with the timid sheep and the crying gulls and the sea things sprawling between the tides.

Many men of the islands would have been glad for Robert Duncan's chance to tend the Thumbcap Weir. For few were the weirs which had been rebuilt after the hard winter, and many were the weirmen whose trawls were set in the Race for cod and haddock and pollock.

"There's less money in line fishing, no doubt," they said. "But it's less of a gamble too."

The Golden Press, the Porpoise and the Dead Horse had been rebuilt at the beginning of the season. The weir on White Head had been erected by the Duncans, and the weir at Herring Cove by John and Donald MacQuarrie from the middle farm. It was said that the Buttercup would be built again and a few of the river weirs.

But the waving brush topmasts which had been scattered about the islands of the Passamaquoddy no longer sent their shadows across the tide.

With few weirs to catch the silver schools, their profits might well be high. For the sardine boats

from the canneries would be bidding high at every seining.

"There's many would be glad of the half share of the Thumbcap's profits that'll be yours," said one of the men on the packers' boats to Robert Duncan.

It was from another boatman that Gid first heard that Tony Luti was back in Harbor By Chance.

"He's been home from jail three or four days now, for it was that long ago I had it from a Harbor By Chance man himself," he told Gid as he salted a tub of herring and threw them into the hold.

"Ay, it's the time he'd be coming," said Gid briefly.

But when he was back in the camp with Debbie, he spoke of it again.

"I'd not have you troubled about it, Debbie, for it's not likely he'll try to do us any harm."

"He's done us harm enough, I'm thinking," Debbie said quietly. "I cannot rid myself of the thought that he's to blame for my father's death, for he'd not have been going through Letete in the great gale if it hadn't been for Tony Luti."

She moved about the camp silently for a few minutes. Gid stood moodily looking out of the window at the Thumbcap. Then she laid her hand on his arm.

"It's you who are troubled, Gid lad, troubled for me. But I've no fear of what Tony will do. No doubt all that he's done is heavy upon him now."

"It's only for the worry it will give you, that I'm troubled, Debbie. There's no need to fear him. We can care for ourselves, I'm thinking. And we'd best have an eye on the sheep besides."

He forced a smile at his words.

"Come, Debbie, let's go up the mountain, for I know where there's a warbler building a nest."

Another day slipped by in the quiet of the Passamaquoddy. In the dawn Robert Duncan was waiting at the weir for Gid with his hopes high for a good catch. Again a few tubs were taken away by the sardine boats, but the great schools of herring stayed outside the bay.

With the approach of the Sabbath, Gid and Debbie started back to Harbor By Chance. In the kitchen of the upper farm house, Upper Archie told them again of Tony's return.

"I saw him only a minute on the road below the kirk," said the gray gentle Scotsman. "I'd have talked to him longer but there was hatred in every word of his, Gid."

Upper Archie shook his head sadly.

"I was thinking he might remember that I'd asked a short sentence for him and helped his fam-

ily through the winter. But it's a queer view he's taking of that. 'I'd have you my enemy out and out, instead of making out that you're my friend,' he told me."

He looked up as Debbie came into the room.

"Debbie lass, it's a great day that brings you to the upper farm as your home."

"I'm not denying that, Uncle Archie," she smiled. "For it's good to be here."

"Tony said never a word about you," went on Upper Archie. "But take care. My heart would be sore if life came hard for you. You are so young . . . so young. . ."

The old man rose and walked over to the open door.

"There's summer in the fields," he said. "Middle Archie's boys have done me a great kindness this year, for they've helped with the planting. I'd not make a good farmer alone—I've been a fisherman too long."

In their talk of the planting and the coming crop the Thumbcap Weir was forgotten.

The morning of the Sabbath came, all green and gold, and cool with shadows. The shadows shortened as the sun climbed the sky, and lengthened through the quiet afternoon. There was an hour or two at the middle farm for Debbie among the surround-

ings that had become home to her through the long winter.

There was an hour, too, at the lower farm, while she found the shining pans and the linen tablecloth which she wished for the camp at the island. The musty odor of a house long closed gave the kitchen an air of unreality, in spite of the little reminders on every hand which brought her father's face to her memory—the dipper from which he used to drink, the pipe which lay beside it on the shelf.

On her way back to the upper farm she stopped again for a word with Janet MacQuarrie.

"I'm thinking it's as well to tell you, Debbie, that Tony Luti has been making no secret of his hate for you and Gid," Janet told her. "Peter had it from the Duncans that he'd sworn to get the Thumbcap Weir for his own again. And more than that, Tony himself was in the store but a day or so ago, with black looks for Peter and Neil and muttering that the MacQuarries were all of the same breed. I'd take care, Debbie."

"But there's little we can do, Aunt Janet. We can wait, and little else."

"Ay, you can only wait for what he'll do. I've no fear that he'd try to harm you or Gid except through the weir."

Debbie picked up her bundles again to start for home.

"It's hard to think that the weir's only ours by license from the Marine and Fisheries, Aunt Janet, for it seems as much ours as the farms themselves. But it's our bread, is the Thumbcap. We'll take good care to hold it."

With a gallant little smile at Janet MacQuarrie in her rocking chair beside the stove, Debbie went out.

Debbie and Gid stayed that night for the meeting at the kirk, and from the kirk went directly to the wharf at Harbor By Chance to start back to the island while the tide served.

Across the fields they could see the lighted window of old Tony's house. But of the black-bearded man himself they had no glimpse, though they went back to Deadman's Island under the vague shadow of his hatred and his threats.

Even that shadow faded in the sunlight of the days that followed.

Debbie was busy about the camp finding every day new ways to make it into a home for Gid. The red table-cloth gave place to the cloth of unbleached linen she had brought from the lower farm. Curtains went up at the window. A barrel chair which Gid had made found a covering of

turkey red cotton, and gay patchwork quilts covered the bunks at the side.

The garden near the willows was planted at last, and Gid built a fence to keep the sheep away from the tender shoots which were pushing up through the damp earth.

Tide by tide he and Robert Duncan tended the Thumbcap Weir. While there was no great run of herring, the weir stocked a little each day, and Gid and Debbie were content.

Days warm with late spring sunshine, nights dim and star-lit, passed over the camp on Deadman's Island.

XV

IT was in the gray twilight of the next Sabbath evening that Gid and Debbie had their first encounter with Tony since his return from jail at the shiretown.

With Upper Archie they were riding through the woods on their way to the kirk when they saw Tony's squat, powerful figure approaching them.

Debbie's quiet "Good evening," met with hostile silence as the black-bearded man passed them. The horses's hoofs were loud in the scented quiet of the woods.

"He'll have no word to say to any of us," Upper Archie remarked.

"There's little enough for us to talk about, I'm thinking," she said. "We could scarce be welcoming him home again."

"True enough, lass," agreed Upper Archie.

Debbie glanced back.

"He's looking after us," she told them.

"If he does no more harm than that, we've little to worry about," Gid remarked.

They jogged along through the deepening dusk.

Gid told Robert Duncan about the meeting the next morning while they rowed back from the weir to the seine reel.

"There's no doubting he hates us," he said. "But since he killed the sheep on the Thumbcap nigh on a year ago, he's done nothing against us at all. I'm beginning to think he's had the fear of the law put into him."

Robert Duncan pulled on his oars without speaking.

"It may be you're right," he said finally. "But he's been making his threats in the hearing of all Harbor By Chance against you—and against anyone who tends the Thumbcap with you."

"It's easy enough to talk—and to find men who'll listen," said Gid briefly.

They reached the seine rack and wound the dripping folds of the seine around it. With a word of farewell, Robert rowed back to his father's camp on White Head, and Gid to the pebbled beach on Deadman's Island where Debbie was waiting for him.

Their days slipped by in quietness there in the island camp. Debbie had found many small tasks about the camp and the garden. With every tide Gid rowed out to the Thumbcap. And through the slow hours of the flood and ebb, they found increas-

ing delight in the cliffs and mountain side of the island.

They had formed the habit of climbing the mountain at sunset to watch the streak of crimson beyond the long black islands fade to the rich blue of evening. Sometimes they saw the steamer running up to Boston as it passed the high green hills of Campobello. Always they saw, heading toward Harbor By Chance or the Shiretown or perhaps to the settlements on Deer Island, the boats of the line fishermen on their way home from the Race.

Then darkness would fill softly the gleaming bowl of bay and sky, coming dimly over the Fundy and flowing at last over the Bocabec Hills. The fog would be about them and the foghorn on the Wolves sounding its warning over the islands, when they came down the mountain to the camp.

Then in the gray dawn, Gid would be again in the Thumbcap, scanning the tide for herring.

Still the great schools stayed outside the Passamaquoddy, but one morning Gid and Robert Duncan rowed back to the island harbor well content with the catch.

"It's no great thing, to be sure," Gid admitted. "But we'll not complain if the Thumbcap stocks as well every tide."

The heavy wet folds of the seine slowly rose from

the net boat to the turning seine reel until at last it hung dripping above them.

Robert Duncan rowed beside Gid to the island and followed him up the beach.

"Gid, I'd have a word with you."

He sat down on the grass at the head of the beach. Reaching for his knife he began whittling at a piece of driftwood. Gid threw himself down beside him, gazing out over the harbor to the brush topmasts of the weir across the ledges.

"I'd like nothing better than to be tending the Thumbcap with you through the summer run," said Robert slowly. "But I cannot do it."

Gid stared at him speechlessly.

"My Uncle Andrew's rheumatism has come back on him," Robert added. "He's not fit for the heavy work of a weir and I'll have to be helping my father on the White Head."

He went on whittling industriously.

"So you're afraid of Tony Luti!" said Gid slowly, with scorn in his voice.

Robert looked up.

"Did it look as if I was afraid of Tony Luti when I swore in court that I'd seen his boat on the Thumbcap the night the sheep were killed?" he demanded. "I'm not afraid of any man!"

Gid stood up.

"Your Uncle Andrew's rheumatism was not so bad a week ago," he remarked.

Robert threw his piece of driftwood away and snapped his knife shut.

"You'll mind my uncle was in his bed for close on a year with his rheumatism," he said angrily as he jumped to his feet. "But I'll give you what's in my mind, Gid Wyn. I don't see any reason to risk my family in another man's quarrel. I'll have you remember that I've made your quarrel mine as many a man wouldn't have been doing. There was no need, I'm thinking, for me to mention that I'd seen Tony Luti's boat on the Thumbcap. There was no need for me to swear to that in the shiretown. I've done right by you and your family. Now I'll do right by mine."

Gid shoved his hands into his pockets.

"Do as you like," he said. "I'll not hold you to any agreement with me for another tide."

"I'm sorry you're taking it this way. You know well enough I'd tend the Thumbcap with a dozen Tony Lutis against us if it was only myself to consider. But he has enough of a grudge against us Duncans as it is. And he's sworn to have his revenge on us for siding with you."

Gid was silent.

"It's not as if there weren't plenty of men among

the islands you can get," Robert went on. "I'll help you find a man myself, and stay until he's on the job—much as my father and uncle need me on the White Head."

"There's no need of tending the Thumbcap another tide," Gid replied.

"I'm sorry you're taking it so," Robert repeated.

Gid pulled a small notebook from his pocket.

"We'll figure out your share of what the Thumbcap's stocked," he said.

They stood at the head of the beach comparing their records.

"I've had all my share except what's due from the cannery next week," said Robert.

"We've enough in the camp to cover that," replied Gid briefly.

He strode up to the camp. Debbie looked up from her sewing as he entered.

"Robert'll be staying to eat a bite with us," she said quietly.

Gid walked over to the bunk and reached under the mattress. He counted out the money due Robert Duncan.

"He'll not be staying, Debbie. He'll not be seining the Thumbcap after today. He's afraid of Tony's threats and says he's made our quarrel his own long enough."

As he hurried out, Debbie jumped to her feet and stood in the doorway looking after him. She saw the money change hands, and saw Robert shove off into the harbor.

Gid came slowly back to the camp.

"Gid lad, tell me." She waited, wide-eyed at his brief recounting.

"It's not hard at all to see his side of it. I don't know that I'd be blaming him, laddie. The Duncans have been our friends for a long time and I'd not lose their friendship because of this."

"Ay, Debbie. But I've no liking for his excuse that his Uncle Andrew's rheumatism is bad, when it's only Tony Luti he's fearing!"

Gid's face was still flushed with anger. Debbie laid a quiet hand on his shoulder.

"We'll find another man to tend the Thumbcap," she said.

Gid looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"If he's to live at home, he'll have to be an Indian Island man," he said. "Tonight when the boats get in from the Race, I'll run over to the settlement. You'll come with me, Debbie?"

"No, laddie. You'll be better able to talk to the men without me, I'm thinking."

The day drew on to evening. In the afternoon Gid rowed alone out to the Thumbcap Weir, but

came back to the island camp without putting the drop-net on.

The sun sank at last behind the Bocabec Hills. From the mountain they could see the boats homeward bound from the Race. Gid rowed out to the mooring and climbed into his power boat. With Debbie watching him from the shore he chugged out of the harbor and disappeared behind Hardwood Island.

Debbie sewed busily for a little while on a white pillow-case she was making for the island camp. The darkness shut in over Deadman's Island, and with it came the fog.

She glanced now and then at the clock on the shelf above the stove. At last she rose and went to the door. The blanket of fog hung heavily over the island. In the great silence only the foghorn uttered its repeated warning.

Debbie closed the door again and sat down to sew. The ticking of the clock marked the passing minutes.

Again she went to the door and listened. Now a distant beat of an engine sounded through the fog.

She picked up the conch shell horn from the shelf beside the clock and went out into the foggy night. Across the resilient carpet of turf she walked to the beach. The boat was coming nearer.

At last she put the conch shell to her lips and its loud blast echoed across the harbor.

She heard the boat approaching. Again the conch shell horn sounded at her lips.

Closer and closer came the steady beat of the engine as the boat nosed into the island harbor. The engine stopped. She heard the creak of the tholepins and the sweep of oars through the water. Then the keel grated on the beach and Gid stood by her side.

"I was fearing you'd have trouble making the harbor," said Debbie. "Did you find a man to tend the weir, Gid?"

Gid walked slowly beside her to the blurred light of the doorway.

"No, Debbie," he said briefly.

They stepped into the camp and Debbie closed the door.

"Every weirman on Indian Island is shivering at Tony Luti's threats," Gid burst forth. "I talked to them everywhere, and there wasn't a man among them but called line fishing a healthier job than tending the Thumbcap Weir."

"But what has Tony been saying to fright them so?" exclaimed Debbie.

"Nothing at all, Debbie, that I can find out. That's just the part of it I'm despising. He's talked

to them all in the Race and said it would be healthier for them to leave the Thumbcap alone. And they're leaving it alone!"

Debbie's worried eyes searched his face.

"Were they friendly in their talk, Gid?"

"Most of them were. They said they had nothing but good wishes for us. But they said they saw no reason for taking part in a quarrel that didn't concern them." He hesitated. "Some of them had little to say at all. They're taking Tony Luti's part, I'm thinking."

They fell silent.

"There's no need to trouble our minds about it," Debbie said at last, just before she blew out the lamp for the night. "We'll find a way, Gid lad."

Before daybreak Gid was up again.

"I'll have a look at the weir," he said as he went out. "Though we'll lose this tide anyway, I'm thinking. For even if all the herring in the Fundy were in the Thumbcap, it would still take two men for the seining."

Debbie braided her hair thoughtfully by lamplight. The chill of early morning was slowly giving way to the warmth from the crackling driftwood in the stove.

When Gid came back he was more worried than before.

"There's a good catch today if I had a man for the seining," he said. "I've put the drop-net on. Perhaps before low tide I can find a man who'll not be standing in fear of Tony Luti."

The darkness lightened and again the bay was loud with the line fishermen bound for the Race.

"I'll go out to the Race, and maybe there I'll find a man," decided Gid.

The fog was lifting as he slipped out of the harbor. Past the far end of Hardwood Island and the Spectacles he went to the clustered boats of the line fishermen, rolling silently in the swell of the bay.

He was met with friendly greetings from the tanned and keen-eyed men he saw. But those to whom he offered the chance to tend the Thumbcap Weir declined it firmly.

"It's not but what I'm wishing you luck, Gid," said one man kindly. "But Tony Luti yonder is making no secret of his hate for you and all the MacQuarries, and no man can foresee what a man with his hot foreign blood will be doing."

Gid followed his glance across the stretch of glittering water. There was Tony hunched over his line.

"I'll be having a word with him," he said quietly.

There were many eyes upon him as he started his engine and chugged across the intervening space.

Some were close enough to hear his words clearly over the water.

"I've had it from a dozen men that you've been threatening anyone who tends the Thumbcap," Gid accused. "You'd better mind well what you're saying, Tony Luti."

The sullen-faced man kept his eyes on the line.

"Upper Archie tricked me out of the Thumbcap," he growled. "But you'll be giving it back."

"We've been over that before, Tony," said Gid sharply. "You know well enough that you didn't build the weir or renew your license. We got it fair and square."

"I didn't have no money that year," he retorted. "There's plenty of men around the islands that couldn't build this year. They'll take my part right enough. They'll have no liking for the trick you played on me or for the pride of the MacQuarries with their weirs and farms."

"Then let your quarrel be with me, as the man that owns the Thumbcap Weir," said Gid. "The man who'll tend it with me isn't concerned."

"My quarrel's with you and any man that's for you," he grunted, and spat over the gunwale.

Gid bent to his engine. The strip of water between them widened. His face was dark with anger as he started back to the island.

"You're seeing now," one of the fishermen called to him.

"I'm seeing clear enough," replied Gid shortly.

At low tide he looked across to the Thumbcap.

"It's hard to have the weir full of herring and none to help with the seining," he said to Debbie. "I've a mind to try it alone. It may be a man on the sardine boat will give a hand."

"I'll go with you, Gid," said Debbie. "There might be something I could do to help with the seining."

"There's little help you can be giving, Debbie. But if you're wanting to row over, there's no reason against it."

So together they rowed out of the harbor and into the Thumbcap Weir. Gid had taken down the seine from the great floating rack, and now let it down into the green tide. When the time came she hauled on the seine with Gid. And when the sardine boat from the factory glided up beyond the waving topmasts of the weir, Gid was dipping the herring and nearly ready to pass them up in tubs to the deck of the larger boat.

"I hear you're needing a man," called one of the boatmen.

"Do you know where I'll be finding one?" asked Gid.

"Where Tony Luti hasn't found someone to listen to him," was the reply.

"I'll have a man by Monday," said Gid stoutly.

When they were back on the island he had another suggestion.

"There may be someone in Peg's Hole. I'll be trying there tonight."

"We could get one of the boys from the middle farm, no doubt," Debbie said.

"I'd not like to ask them, Debbie. They're helping on the upper farm—Peter especially. And John and Donald have their own weir to tend at Herring Cove. Then there's the store for Neil, and Dugal has his chores around the farm. They'd come, but I'd not ask them, Debbie."

"No, Gid lad," she agreed. "They've enough to keep them busy. We'll hope there's a man in Peg's Hole instead."

That night Gid headed for Peg's Hole with new hope. But though the street which climbed the hill from the wharf was gay with a crowd of fishermen from all over the islands, there was no man who would tend the Thumbcap Weir.

Light streamed from the windows of a saloon where the men of the islands came for drinking and companionship on Saturday night. Gid saw Robert Duncan with a group of young men there.

The bright posters in front of a moving picture hall had attracted a group of laughing girls. They stood with arms locked, chattering shrilly. Girls from the sardine canneries in Eastport or Lubec, Gid decided, noticing the bright ribbon one had drawn through her dark hair.

Wisps of fog floated from the bay. Gid went down the hill to the wharf alone.

Back in the lamp-lighted camp under the mountain he told Debbie of his failure.

"Never you mind, laddie," she comforted him again. "We'll find a way."

For the first Sabbath morning since their marriage, they found themselves on the island.

A great quietness filled the bay. Not even the boats bound for the race broke the silence of the morning.

"We'll go up on the mountain, Gid," said Debbie, "and forget a while all that's troubling us."

"If you're wanting to, Debbie, but when the tide turns perhaps we'd better go into Harbor By Chance. There may be a man there."

"I've thought of every family in Harbor By Chance," Debbie said seriously. "There's the Duncans—but Robert will have nothing to do with it. There are the Stones—but they're busy with their farm, the only farmers in all Harbor by Chance.

that aren't fishermen too. There's old Lish Penny—his fishing days are gone."

One by one she named the families of Harbor By Chance.

"There's no man for us there," admitted Gid.

They climbed the mountain, up past the spring, along sheep paths shadowed and pungent with fir. Suddenly they were out in the sunlight. They clambered over the rocks to the rounded sandstone top of the mountain, and there Debbie dropped with a cry of delight.

The clearing fog seemed to be lifting with it the islands of the Passamaquoddy. Hardwood Island, close at hand, was emerging from its silvery cloak. Off to the west, Deer Island floated phantom-like between the bay and sky, and beyond, the Bocabec Hills were clothed in blue mist. To the north the White Horse, its barren contours softened with the fog, seemed to lift lightly from the sparkling water about it. To the south, the Spectacles, low and sandy, and Campobello and Grand Manan, massive and high, shared in the enchantment of the fog. The long black Wolves to the east, the last outposts of the islands of the Passamaquoddy were blurred by fog and distance. But even East Wolf and Flat Wolf, Spur Wolf and Southern Wolf, seemed about to take wing into the light and mist of the morning.

They sat for a time in the silence in which they had so often found content. Debbie's firm chin was cupped in her hand.

It was Gid who spoke again of the subject foremost in their thoughts.

"I see nothing for it, Debbie, but to ask one of the boys from the middle farm to help us out."

"But we've decided against that, Gid," Debbie protested.

"I've been thinking on it for two days and two nights, Gid. Why do you need a man to tend the Thumbcap when there's a woman here to do it?"

"A woman, Debbie!"

"Gid, I've been wondering since I came to the island what my hands would find to do. For the camp is only a single room to care for and the little garden will not be enough to keep me busy. I've watched the seining all my life, Gid. I'm sure that after the first few tides I can help you as much as a man."

"But, Debbie! The work is hard and heavy. You couldn't dip herring."

Debbie's fingers explored the tensed muscle of her arm.

"Feel that. I've churned and I've washed and I've swept. I'm strong enough to tend the Thumbcap with you."

"But hauling on a seine is harder work—it's a man's work, Debbie."

"I helped you a little bit yesterday, Gid. You said I helped you. Every tide I could be helping you more."

He looked at her helplessly, unconvinced.

"Debbie," he protested. "You know there are many who think it was an ill day when you married me—a boy that Upper Archie MacQuarrie took from the poor-house. They——"

Debbie interrupted him with an anguished little cry.

"When I'm loving you so, it breaks my heart to hear you talk like that. There's no one thinks less of you because you lived in the poor-house."

"Tony Luti threw it in my teeth yesterday," he went on doggedly. "They know I've not a thing for us to live on but the weir that Uncle Archie gave me . . ."

"There's no one who starts with any more than what his father can give him, Gid. Uncle Archie was a father to you—you've said so often enough. You've brooded till you can't see it straight and true. I'll not have you brooding on it so!"

"I'm not brooding on it, Debbie. I'm just telling you what everybody knows. And they'll not say that I send my wife to seine a weir. They'll say it's

no work for a woman to be doing, or for any man to be letting her do."

"I don't care what they say!" cried Debbie. "Why, Gid, you'll not let Tony Luti have his way without fighting, will you? We can seine the Thumbcap Weir together, and we'll have all of what she stocks. It's little enough altogether. But it's twice as much as if we were giving half of it to another man."

Gid was silent. He stared at the bare rock at his feet.

"Gid lad," pleaded Debbie with her hand on his sleeve, "let's be doing this thing together. It's the brave thing to be doing."

"It's the brave heart in you that wants to do it, Debbie," cried Gid. "How can I speak against it? But I'd not have you scorned."

"I'd not scorn myself, Gid. We'll do it together."

"Only till we find a man to do it, Debbie!"

"Only till we find a man to tend the Thumbcap with you," she agreed. "But," she added, flinging her arms wide to the sunlight-flooded bay in one glad gesture, "I'm near hoping we'll not find anyone else, Gid, for the joy that's in me to be doing it with you."

XVI

THE pallor of spring deepened to the rich green of summer; the fresh scents of moist earth gave way to the fragrance of sun-warmed grass and clover. The frail white and purple violets were gone, but the green turf at the foot of the mountain was stabbed with the clear yellow of daisies and buttercups. In the shadowed recesses of the woods the one flowered pyrola and white wood sorrel added their heavy sweetness to the perfume of the summer.

On every tide Debbie tended the Thumbcap with Gid. The men on the sardine boats from the canneries knew her now and gave her a friendly hail when they glided up beyond the brush topmasts of the weir and stood by for herring.

They brought to Debbie and Gid word of the other weirs from the mouth of the Magaguadavic to Quoddy Head, and from the shiretown to the Wolves—the few which had been rebuilt after the winter of heavy ice.

But the word they brought was of empty weirs and discouraged weirmen, beaten in their gamble with the tides.

"There'll be many an empty flour barrel around the Passamaquoddy next winter," they prophesied. "Though there are big schools of herring out in the Fundy if only they'd come inside."

The men on the sardine boats did not tell Gid and Debbie of the growled comments of the other weir owners when they spoke of the Thumbcap Weir. They did not tell them that many a man had decided it was a woman's seining which kept the herring outside the bay.

"A woman'll bring no good to the Passamaquoddy weirs," the discouraged weirmen agreed.

"Tony Luti's put a curse on the Thumbcap," a few decided. "It's a curse that's fallen on us all."

Day after day and tide after tide they kept their weary vigil; and in the darkness before dawn, at the turn of the tide, Gid and Debbie rowed out to put the drop on the Thumbcap, and waited in vain for the sweeping silver schools.

"We'll be needing all the Thumbcap can stock in the fall run," said Debbie. "It's well we're not sharing it with anyone else."

"Ay, Debbie, we'll be needing it," replied Gid.

They saw no more of Tony than the brief glimpses they had of him on the Sabbath in Harbor By Chance, or the sight of his boat chugging back and forth from the Race.

From the mountain top on Deadman's Island they often watched the boats go in at sundown, and followed Tony Luti's as it slipped past the other side of Hardwood Island and headed for Harbor By Chance.

"He's talked and made his threats, but he's not raised his hand against us," remarked Gid.

"Like as not his hate will spend itself in talk," Debbie said hopefully. "There's little he could do against us anyway, I'm thinking, and still less because he's talked so much. The whole of Quoddy would be blaming him for anything that happened around the Thumbcap Weir."

"There's little he could do," agreed Gid. "But he's sworn to make it unhealthy to tend the Thumbcap. He's hoping we'll not renew the license next year, I'm thinking."

"It's the Thumbcap that gives us our bread and butter. We'll hold on to it, Gid."

Gid nodded.

"We'll hold on to it, Debbie. We've pulled through the summer with you tending the weir when there wasn't a man to be found."

"It took little enough to frighten them away," commented Debbie scornfully.

They looked out across the island-dotted bay to the fading fires of the sunset. Already lights were

kindling in the windows of the Deer Island settlement. The windows of Eastport, touched to flame a few minutes before by the long torches of sundown, had dimmed and brightened again with the pale sparks of evening lamps.

A white-throated sparrow whistled its long thin notes from the underbrush on the side of the mountain, as Debbie and Gid sat together on the bald summit.

"It took little enough to frighten them away," repeated Debbie.

Gid looked out over the darkening bay.

"It's the fear of the thing they don't know," he said. "If Tony Luti'd said right out what it was he'd do to a man that tended the Thumbcap, there'd have been no man who'd have feared to face him. But they didn't know what to guard against. So they were afraid."

"Ay, Gid. It's like the shadows, the long shadows at night, that will frighten a little child."

"It's like the fear men have of Letete, Debbie—the same fear Tony has since we brought Robert Duncan ashore. It's more than a fear of the ledges and the tide. It's the thought that a man who saves another man from drowning will be drowned himself—that the sea will get her man. I've heard of men who watched a friend go under, and made no

move. . . It's the fear of what they cannot see, Debbie."

She was silent, looking through the deepening shadows toward Letete.

"It's like the fear that young Tony has when the boys are plaguing him," she said at last. "I've heard them crying 'The devil's after you, Tony, but the devil can't swim.' And then I've watched him run to his father's boat near crying for fright."

"Old Tony's threats are shadowy enough to frighten the men who'd have no fear of Tony himself," said Gid. "They've read of the cities where there's killing and they're fearing Tony will kill them—though there's been but one murder in the whole county these forty years."

"You don't believe Tony would plot a thing like that, laddie."

"No, Debbie . . . though there's no telling the way his thoughts will take. His thoughts are twisted, I'm thinking."

"Ay, Gid . . . poor twisted Tony."

They sat silent on the mountaintop. Eastward the lighthouse on the Wolves shone steadily. The dark vault above them was sprinkled with stars, and the dim water stretched glimmering away. The wind walked softly with cool feet over the earth.

Then came a morning when the herring struck in the Thumbcap Weir. The weary wait from tide to tide was rewarded, and beneath the surface of the water uncounted silver streaks flashed to and fro.

Even in the darkness before the dawn, when Gid rowed out to put the drop-net on the weir, he knew that the herring had struck. And in the fog-blurred break of day, he and Debbie let the seine down into the green tide rejoicing.

At the summons of the conch shell horn the sardine boats from the canneries came feeling their way through the fog. It was not a single sardine boat this morning. They had come from the Canadian canners at Black's Harbor, and from the American packers in Eastport and Lubec, all ready to bid for the catch.

They came from canneries which would have to shut down for lack of herring if the weirs of the Passamaquoddy continued to stay empty with every tide. They came for the herring in the Thumbcap Weir.

And in the shadows of the waving brush, Gid and Debbie were hauling on the seine, Debbie with the sun agleam on her hair and her yellow oilskins, Gid with his dark face flushed and excited.

"It's a big haul, Debbie," he exclaimed. "The

biggest haul we've had. It'll save the season for us even if there's not another herring before the ice comes in."

They were hauling the seine tighter and tighter. Above them the gulls circled with harsh cries. Beneath the surface of the tide the darting silver traffic became denser with the tightening seine.

The Black's Harbor boat opened the bidding.

"We'll take the whole catch at eight dollars a hogshead, Gid," came the call across the water.

"Nine dollars," retorted a man from an Eastport boat.

"You know well the law keeps me from sending fish across the border for less than ten," replied Gid quietly.

"I'll take them at ten then," was the answer from the Eastport boat.

"Eleven," said the Lubec man briefly.

"Twelve dollars," from the Black's Harbor boat.

Gid and Debbie hauled steadily on the seine. The ruddy light of the lifting sun burned through the fog. One herring, then another, jumped clear of the water, flashed for a tumbling moment in mid air, and slapped the surface of the tide again.

The voices beyond the brush topmasts of the weir were growing sharp.

"Twenty dollars—it's enough for any man."

"Twenty-two," was the laconic bid from the Lubec man.

"Twenty-five." It was the Black's Harbor boat.

Debbie had unbuttoned her jacket at the throat. Her eyes were shining.

"Gid, how many hogsheads have we here?"

"Forty, maybe fifty, Debbie."

They lifted the cork floaters from the water and pulled the far edge of the seine toward them. Over the gunwale fell a thudding cascade of silver.

"Thirty dollars a hogshead," cried the man from Black's Harbor.

"You're bidding us up. You've no thought of buying," charged the Lubec boatman hotly.

"It'll serve you right, Gid, if we let him have it at that and go away. You'll have no sale for your fish at all," said one of the men from Eastport.

"Gid lad," said Debbie in a low tone, "it's money enough and more. We'd better take it. They might go away."

"They'll not go away, Debbie," he whispered.

"We've treated you fair before," came the defence from the Black's Harbor boatman. "You've no call to distrust us now."

"Thirty-one," bid the Lubec man.

The gulls flashed above them, swerving toward the sun. On the surface of the water gleamed the

rainbow light of uncounted scales. Again Gid and Debbie drew the seine toward them.

"Thirty-two," came the call from the Black's Harbor boat.

"Thirty-two fifty," was the reply from the Lubec bidder.

Gid and Debbie had seized the dipnets and were filling their boats with flashing silver. Again and again the gleaming mass poured from the dipnets and flapped about their feet.

The fog was lifting and the sunlight blazed on the red gold of Debbie's hair, the mass of silver at her feet and the opal-shot herring scales floating on the tide.

"Thirty-three."

"Thirty-four."

With that the man on the Black's Harbor boat dropped out of the bidding. It was between the Eastport and Lubec packers.

"Thirty-four."

"Thirty-four fifty."

Gid's face was tense with excitement. Debbie's breath came quickly through her parted lips. Steadily they dipped the herring from the silver-crusted tide. Knee-deep they stood in their writhing silver cargo.

"Thirty-five," from the Eastport boat.

"Take them. I'll go no higher than that!" ejaculated the Lubec bidder in disgust.

"Thirty-five dollars!" exclaimed Debbie to Gid.

"Ay, Debbie!" he said simply.

The sardine boats from Black's Harbor and Lubec were getting under way. Slowly they began to follow the twisting course through the ledges.

"It's a rich man you'll be, Gid," they called across the water, friendly enough now that the bidding was over.

Beyond the ledges the mountain on Deadman's Island loomed above the glimmering harbor. Only a few wisps of fog still clung to its rock-ribbed slopes. The sun washed the mountain, the harbor, the ledges and the brush topmasts of the weir with clear gold light.

Debbie laid down her dip-net. Her boat was filled to the gunwales.

"You've dipped enough, Debbie. It's greater than your strength," declared Gid.

"There's more to dip, Gid."

"And there's men to dip them." Gid's voice was firm.

"I can do it, Gid. I'd not draw back from the work I said I'd do."

"We've never had a catch like this, Debbie. You've no need to do it. The men on the sardine

boat will help with the dipping. We've money enough now to pay them well."

Slowly they pulled toward the sardine boat in the mouth of the weir. The bargain was quickly made.

"For we'd not have her dipping herring anyway," one man protested. "Not with a catch the size of this."

Debbie climbed aboard the sardine boat, and sat on the deck while the tubs of herring were passed up. From each tub she took one herring. So the tally was kept.

Tub after tub came over the side, and was thrown into the hold with handfuls of salt on top of it. The boats below were emptied. Again the dip-nets were plunged into the tide.

Then through the ledges came another boat, schooner rigged. They watched it approach.

"She's not from any of the canneries," said the Eastport man.

"She's a Nova Scotia baiter, I'm fearing," said Gid. "We'll have to give her all the herring she wants. It's the law."

"They say there's herring in the Thumbcap," came the hail from the Nova Scotia baiter. "We'll need five hogsheads. We'll give you eight dollars a hogshead."

"With forty or fifty hogsheads in the weir we can spare five well enough," commented Debbie in relief.

"And it's not as if we were giving them away," said Gid.

The baiter glided up to the mouth of the weir. Tub after tub was swung aboard, ten tubs to a hogshead until the five hogsheads were complete. The money changed hands. The baiter slipped away through the ledges.

Then steadily they kept on with the dipping of the herring. The tide rose bit by bit on the weir stakes. The sun climbed further from the rim of the Fundy. And on the deck of the sardine boat Debbie sat taking her herring from each tub to keep the tally.

Finally the last tub was passed up to the man on deck, salted and poured into the hold. They counted the herring in the tally tub aloud.

"Thirty-five hogsheads," exclaimed Gid at the end. "We've done better than we could ever have hoped."

"Thirty-five hogsheads," agreed the boatman from the cannery, making the notation.

Debbie climbed down into the dinghy beside Gid. The sardine boat crept through the channel, leaving them alone in the Thumbcap Weir.

"Thirty-five hogsheads, Gid, at thirty-five dollars—" Debbie's eyes were wide.

Gid pulled out his own notebook and figured the total.

"It's twelve hundred and twenty-five dollars, Debbie," he said in an awed tone. "And the money from the baiter is forty dollars more!"

"What ever will we do with so much, Gid?"

He looked with troubled eyes at the mountain on Deadman's Island.

"I'll go to Eastport the end of the week to get it, Debbie. But I don't know what we're to do with it. We'd not be safe with all that money in the camp."

"We'd take it to the bank up river, and then it'll be safe," suggested Debbie.

"We'd best put it in the bank," agreed Gid. "But now that the herring have struck we can't lose a tide. We'll have to wait till the tides fall off next week."

"We could put it under the mattress in the bunk till then," she said thoughtfully.

"No, I'd be fearing for you every minute then, when I wasn't with you. We mustn't have it in the camp."

He began to haul in the seine. All about them was a rocking sea of silver scales, shot with lights of red and green and purple. Two hours high, the sun

blazed above them. A few gulls still circled with snowy breasts and wings over the Thumbcap Weir.

"They'll know all over the islands we have it here," said Gid, still troubled. "We must think of a place to hide it that no one else will be dreaming about."

"Under a tree," Debbie suggested again.

"That's where money's often hidden, Debbie."

"The bluebells are blossoming now, Gid. We can bury it in a clump of bluebells high on a cliff."

"Nobody would be thinking of the bluebells," he agreed.

The dripping seine lay folded in the boat. The tide sucked between the weir stakes and rocked rhythmically beneath them.

"We can put it in the cave, Debbie," said Gid. "There's none who knows of the cave, I'm thinking, but Uncle Archie and you and me."

Debbie nodded.

"In the cave back of the mountain," she approved. "It'll be safe there, Gid, in the cave behind the stunted fir."

"No doubt it would be safe anyway, Debbie. There's none who'd take it but Tony Luti. But it'll do no harm to keep it hidden until we can take it up river to the bank."

Gid slipped the oars into the thole-pins and,

with the net boat in tow, rowed toward the mouth of the weir.

Debbie let her hand trail in the cool green water. Afloat on the swinging tide she watched the swaying purple and green of dulce and rockweed clinging to the ledges.

The sun touched the drifting scales in the Thumbcap Weir to a thousand gleaming lights. Silver-crusted was their dinghy with flashing herring scales. Silver-feathered were their oars as they rowed through the ledges to the seine reel in the harbor.

XVII

THE word of the big catch in the Thumbcap Weir flew quickly around the islands and shores of the Passamaquoddy. There was talk of it in the kitchens of Harbor By Chance, and round the stoves in the Deer Island settlement. On Saturday night they talked of it in the Peg's Hole saloon. And along the wharves at Eastport and Lubec the news spread swiftly.

Everywhere it brought rejoicing.

"The herring have struck," was the cry. "It'll be a good year. It'll not be long until we have good hauls everywhere."

Soon the weirs from the Wolves to the Bocabec Hills in all the coves and shallows of the bay had their share of the good fortune. Tide by tide the silver schools swept in from the Fundy. And after the months of waiting the weirmen of the Passamaquoddy found a ready sale for the herring they seined at last.

When Gid went to Eastport for his money from the cannery he found many to rejoice with him on his good fortune. They stopped him on the wharf. They hailed him from the Race.

"It's the luck that was coming to you for the way you and Debbie have seined the Thumbcap Weir," they said.

At the cannery he received a check for the amount due him.

"We might have known that for so much money they'd be giving me a check," Gid commented to Debbie when he came back to the island. "There's no need of burying it in a clump of bluebells, I'm thinking, or of putting it in the cave back of the stunted fir."

They kept it carefully in the camp until the next week when the tides were off. When they went to Harbor By Chance on the Sabbath day, Gid carried it in his inside pocket and at Debbie's urging felt it now and then to be sure it still was there.

In Harbor By Chance, too, they found their friends happy because of the great catch in the Thumbcap Weir. Angus Duncan shook Gid's hand warmly in the store above the wharf.

"It is good," he said earnestly. "It's luck you're both deserving."

"It's no luck ever comes to the Passamaquoddy," said Lish Penny, leaning on his cane. "But if you've struck a bit of it, I'm hoping it'll hold on!"

Young Robert Duncan, too, congratulated him sincerely.

"I'm glad you're doing well in the Thumbcap, Gid," he said.

But it was from their own people that Gid and Debbie had the warmest words of congratulation.

"It's a glad day," said Upper Archie briefly, his kind eyes alight for the first time in many months.

"It is the justice of God," said Janet MacQuarrie on the middle farm.

Debbie drove with Gid to the bank up river through fragrant miles of woods and fields. When last they had taken that road, it was white with winter snow. Gleaming icicles hung from the board fences. Snowy burdens weighted the tall firs. Today the sunlight was warm on the land and the air was heavy with summer.

They talked of that winter skating party as the horse jogged over the dusty road. But their talk was more often of the check in Gid's pocket.

"We'll build another room on the camp, Debbie," Gid decided. "It'll be handy for us to have it even for ourselves, and we'll have to have it anyway, I'm thinking, when we get a man to tend the weir."

He slapped the reins, and they trotted more briskly along a stretch of level road.

"I've no doubt we could find a man now," he went on. "Now that we've had a big catch in the

Thumbcap, there must be men who think a share in it would be worth the risk of Tony Luti's anger."

"No, lad," said Debbie firmly. "They wouldn't come when we needed them. We'll not ask them now that we've found we can get along without them."

"You're proud, Debbie. But I'm proud too. I'd not have my wife seining the weir longer than need be."

"Gid lad, we'll wait a bit. I just ask that. Some day we'll find a man to take it. But we'll wait."

They deposited the check for the big catch in the bank, and drove back toward Harbor By Chance.

The road-side was starred with the purple of thistle blossoms. Above them a goldfinch darted in the sunlight. A flicker flew with its grating call across a little clearing.

They drove through the blueberry barrens with the low green bushes stretching away to their right and to their left.

"It'll soon be blueberry time," said Debbie. "I'll find out when Aunt Janet goes berrying and go with her. It'll be good to have some put up for the winter along with our strawberry preserves."

Through the blueberry barrens and the dim green

woods the long road stretched. Between the trees they could see the carpet of deep moss bright with scattered sunshine.

Through the firs and clover-sweet pastures to the upper farm they drove. After supper they said good-bye to Upper Archie and started back to the camp on the island.

"For even with the tides off, there might be some herring in the weir," they decided.

Then began again the watch from tide to tide. The hours between were busy with tasks about the camp. Gid began the building of the new room in preparation for the coming of another man to tend the Thumbcap. But Debbie day after day rowed out through the ledges and seined the weir as before.

"It's a happy task, Gid lad, to seine the Thumbcap Weir with you," she declared. "I'd be sick at heart to let another go instead."

Still the run of herring continued.

Warm midsummer days and nights marched over the camp on Deadman's Island: days broken only by the hail of the line fishermen on their way to the Race, and talk with the men from the canneries at the seining of the Thumbcap Weir; nights quiet with the breathing of the wind and tide.

It was a line fisherman in from the Race who

first brought them word of the undercurrent of feeling among the men of the islands.

"It's jealousy," he told them. "They're jealous of your good luck in the Thumbcap, Gid. They're jealous—them that didn't have the money to build after their weirs went out with the ice. They're thinking that your luck might have been theirs, too."

Gid was working on the addition to the camp. Around him were crisp curled shavings and in the salt morning air was the fragrance of new lumber. He stopped hammering for a moment.

"I'm sorry for that," he said. "They shouldn't be forgetting that it hasn't always been good luck with us."

The man lit his pipe, and puffed slowly.

"They'd be more like to remember that if it weren't for Tony Luti, Gid. He's the man that's stirring up their feelings. He's saying they're situated just as he was when Upper Archie got his weir away from him."

He puffed silently as Gid went on with his work. The sharp pounding of the hammer sounded steadily.

"He's made us trouble enough. And we've never done him harm at all," Gid said sadly.

"He has three things against you, Gid. He's talk-

ing about owning the Thumbcap on account of that deed some one gave him. Of course there's no man but laughs at him for that. But he's talking too about the Thumbcap Weir and how you got the license when he didn't build, and there's plenty who feel that they'd be in the same fix this year if someone took their licenses up because they didn't build. And then he's talking about the day you made him go out in the boat to help save Robert Duncan. There's some that praise you for going yourself, Gid. But there's many who say you had no call to be taking Tony with you against his will. For you can't deny that there's many a man gone down after he'd saved another. They are telling how not many years ago a man pulled a drowning man out of Letete, and just a year after that he was fishing in the Race and fell overboard, and never came up once. And then there was . . ."

"That's the talk of old women, or of children on the night of Hallowe'en!" interrupted Gid impatiently. "It's little fitting the tongue of a man!"

"I'd not have you think there's many talking like that, Gid. It's only a few that are jealous, and Tony Luti sees they don't forget it."

Debbie came to the door of the camp. Her sleeves were rolled to the elbows and her hands and wrists were white with flour. Above the blue ging-

ham dress rose the creamy line of her throat, the quiet oval of her face, and her coiled gold braids.

With a smile and a word of greeting to their visitor, she stood in the doorway listening.

"There's little use in troubling about Tony Luti," she said at last. "He's done us harm enough with his twisted thoughts of the Thumbcap Weir. It's nigh on a year ago since the sheep were killed yonder on the Thumbcap. It's more than half a year since my father and Middle Archie MacQuarrie went down in Letete—and though we can't blame that on Tony, it wouldn't have happened but for him. All this summer his threats have kept the men of the islands from tending the Thumbcap Weir. But we've tended it alone and found a bit of luck at last. And I cannot see how his threats can hurt us now."

There were sudden tears in her eyes as she turned back into the camp. She dashed them away angrily with her hand, leaving a white streak of flour on her cheek.

Before her on the table was the warm yeast and water, and the heap of sifted flour, ready for her to set the sponge for her bread.

As her fingers slid into the cool flour she heard the voices of the men outside, alternating with the steady beat of Gid's hammer.

"Tony's making no threats against you, Gid," she heard the line fisherman explain. "He's keeping the jealousy of the others sharp. But he's making no threats at all that I've heard. He sits more often quiet in his boat, black and brooding."

Steadily she mixed the flour and water, stirring it smooth. Through the open door she saw the sheep come out of the woods on the mountain side and pick their way down a rocky path to the green turf. There they grazed quietly at a little distance from the camp.

When she had set the sponge, she lifted the bread pan and carried it out of doors to the sunny side of the camp where she left it to rise in the warmth of the sun.

The line fisherman was knocking his pipe against the end of the saw-horse.

"I'm not one to meddle in other folk's business, Gid," he said as he stood up to go. "I'm fearing I shouldn't have said as much today. But it'll do you no harm to know that Tony Luti's working up feelings against you among the men he can get to listen to him."

He nodded to Debbie as he started toward the beach. In a moment his boat chugged out of the harbor toward the fishing fleet that was rocking in the Race.

She sat down on a pile of lumber and watched Gid without speaking.

"Our friends'll not turn against us, Debbie," he said at last.

"I'm not troubled because of Tony Luti," she replied quietly.

He glanced at her and smiled.

"Even flour becomes you, Debbie," he remarked chuckling.

Her serious gray eyes looked at him over the streak of flour on her cheek.

"Flour, Gid?"

He stepped down beside her and brushed it gently away. As she turned back to the camp, he went on with his work.

She paused a moment in the doorway. Above her hung a bunch of tansy, placed there to keep the flies away.

"I'm tired today, laddie. I'll rest awhile till the bread is ready for kneading."

"Debbie—I'm fearing the seining is too much for your strength."

"No, Gid. I'm happiest when we're seining the Thumbcap, and now that the tides are on again, there's like to be a good catch tonight."

She stepped inside the camp. The sound of Gid's hammering went on. The sheep ventured a little

nearer the camp, and then at a sudden movement fled timidly to the edge of the woods. The wind brushed the grass with swift silver and was as swiftly gone.

He glanced at the curling edge of the harbor. The tide was an hour high, creeping imperceptibly over the brown rockweed.

It had reached the jagged rock near the point when he heard Debbie moving again.

She appeared in the doorway under the bunch of tansy, smiling at him.

"I've had a fine rest," she said, as she bent to look at the bread.

It was bubbling thickly near the top of the pan. She lifted it and carried it into the camp.

A few moments later Gid followed her in. He sat watching her as she kneaded it with firm rhythmic motions and with a final deft motion lifted the mass of dough and placed it in the bread pan. Then she carried it out into the sunlight and set it to rise once more.

"I cannot rid myself of the thought of Tony Luti," she said when she came in. She sat down on the edge of the lower bunk. "It's a weary time since he began to claim the Thumbcap. I'm tired, laddie."

"But, Debbie, you've kept our hearts high from

the beginning. Only this morning you said you were not troubled."

"I'm not forgetting that, Gid. And I'm not losing heart. We'll hold the weir against him."

With lifted head she cleared away the bread board and laid the cloth for their noonday meal.

The afternoon drew slowly on. The sun lay warm and mellow on the island. Over the harbor leaped glittering points of light.

They climbed the mountain past the cold spring. There the bluebells were in bloom in the crannies of the rocks and milkweed splashed its vivid orange on the mountainside.

They came on the sheep grazing contentedly under the birches. A little later, from their vantage point on the mountain top, they saw them picking their way over the brown rockweed and the slippery ledges to the Thumbcap. Beyond the moving line of sheep the brush topmasts of the Thumbcap Weir lifted above the tide.

Near sundown they saw the fleet returning from the Race. Boats were putting into the settlement on Deer Island and striking north to Harbor By Chance.

"That's Tony Luti's boat yonder," Gid pointed.

They watched the black boat slip through the gleaming water on the other side of Hardwood Is-

land and head for Harbor By Chance. When it grew small in the distance, they started down the rocky path to the camp under the mountain.

After supper there was still time in the long twilight for Gid to work on the new room. In the camp Debbie had built a hot driftwood fire and slipped her bread into the oven.

The dusk deepened to the black and silver night.

"It's the dark of the moon, Debbie," remarked Gid. "The flood should be bringing us a good catch in the Thumbcap Weir."

For a little while they sat quietly by lamp-light with the door open to the summer night. The fragrance of baking bread crept through the room.

At last Debbie took the loaves from the oven. With a napkin she dusted the flecks of white flour from their golden brown crusts.

"I'm getting my hand in with the bread," she said with satisfaction. "It took me a little time to get used to the new oven."

In the little camp under the mountain there was quietness. Not even the foghorn from the Wolves sounded in the clear night. Gid stepped to the door and looked out. The stars, like bright needles, pricked the soft tent of darkness.

"It's past the turn of the tide, Debbie. A few hours more and I'll have to be putting the drop on

the weir. We'd best get a bit of sleep now while we can."

He stood there for a few moments, leaning against the side of the door. Behind him Debbie was moving about the camp, making her preparations for the night. She stopped in front of the small mirror hung above the shelf. In the glass she could see the shadows of weariness under her eyes. Slowly she took the hairpins from her coiled braids until they dropped in shining ropes over her shoulders.

"Listen, Debbie," Gid cried suddenly from the doorway. "You can hear the herring coming in!"

She turned quickly, her face alight with interest. In a moment she was looking out, listening tensely. From the harbor came the hissing of the passing schools, a silver whisper through the dark.

They stepped out on the springy turf. Behind them was the lighted rectangle of the door. On the grass a lane of light reached after them. But their eyes were on the black harbor.

With one accord they turned toward the point. Over the sheep-cropped turf to the jagged rocks they walked. The stunted firs crouched grotesquely in the dim star-light. The black water sucked at their feet.

"Hark, Gid," whispered Debbie.

Silent they stood. And past them through the night went the schools of herring.

"Men who've tended weirs a lifetime, Debbie, know the way the herring go," he said in a low tone. "They take the same roads through the bay year after year. I've heard that they split at the end of Hardwood Island yonder, and some schools pass to the west of the island, and some come this way through the harbor."

Softly through the summer night came the whisper of the sweeping schools.

"It's because of the herring lanes that the Thumbcap stocks so well, Debbie. They're moving now to the Thumbcap. Hear them coming, Debbie, hear them coming. . . ."

They stood silent on the rocky point and listened to the shoals of herring cut the black water of the harbor.

Far away they heard the beat of a power boat. But in Deadman's Harbor there was only the lap of the tide at their feet and the surging whisper of the herring.

Debbie stepped closer to Gid. He slipped his arm around her waist. Beneath his hand was the silken firmness of her braided hair. So they waited, listening.

The beating of the power boat seemed to come

nearer. In the silence of the night, it seemed just beyond the Thumbcap. Then it stopped.

"It will be the Duncans at the White Head camp," explained Gid.

Again the night was still. On came the rushing schools of herring, swift came the herring through the black water. And the tide crept up on the rocks.

Debbie with a sudden movement stepped back.

"My foot is wet, Gid," she said softly, hushed by the quiet of the night. "The tide is rising fast."

They walked back across the rocks to the sure footing of the turf above the high water mark.

"It's time for us to sleep, anyway, Debbie," Gid said. "It'll be high tide in a few hours now—with fish in the Thumbcap Weir."

They looked out across the harbor toward the weir, across black water still swept by swift silver schools passing in the night.

"There'll be herring to seine when the morning comes," agreed Debbie happily.

Hardly had she spoken when her hand clutched Gid's sleeve.

"Gid, did you see that?"

She could hear his quickened breathing.

"Ay, Debbie. I saw it!"

"What was it we were seeing, Gid?"

"Like as not it was nothing at all, Debbie," he said slowly. "A glimmer of light like that might have been only the phosphorescence that makes your oars sometimes at night look like flame."

"Not one gleam like that, Gid, in the dark night."

They were whispering now, looking out across the ledges.

"Not a single spurt of light like that," agreed Gid. "But even if it looked like a match . . . Debbie, we've been on guard so long, we're dreaming! There couldn't be a light yonder!"

"But there was a light, Gid. We were both seeing it at once."

"It was like the striking of a match," whispered Gid.

"A match in the Thumbcap Weir!" Debbie agreed.

They were still rooted to the spot. Gid moved at last.

"I'll go up on the mountain, Debbie. . . . It'll bring me a bit nearer to see if there's anyone there."

"You'd best take a lantern, Gid."

"If there's a man in the Thumbcap Weir, he'd see my lantern," protested Gid.

"But Gid, you'll fall from the cliff to the rocks below on this dark night."

"Of course I'll not fall, Debbie. I'll hold to the paths I know. It'll be but a minute or two till I'm back."

He was running softly across the turf to the woods. Debbie stretched our her hand to stay him, then let it fall to her side. She waited breathlessly, looking out across the dark harbor.

Still came the hissing of the sweeping silver schools, and the tide sucked at the rocks unendingly.

She was standing there when Gid came back. She had not heard him coming through the woods and nearly cried out when she saw him striding toward her through the dark.

"I couldn't see anyone stirring," he said. "We must have dreamed it, Debbie. Or perhaps it was a herring that caught the light as he jumped."

She stood, unconvinced.

"Come, Debbie . . . it is late!" He started back toward the camp.

She turned to follow him, then looked once more.

"Gid!" she cried. "It's there again. The light!"

Gid swung about and followed her pointing finger. Across the ledges a point of light flickered.

Even as they watched, it flared to a ragged cone of flame and tore a red swathe in the dark.

"Gid!" cried Debbie again. "They're burning the weir. It's Tony Luti burning the weir."

Beside her Gid was silent, straining his eyes toward the Thumbcap.

Slowly the blazing torch began to move. They watched its reflection, a snake of light writhing in the black water, writhing slowly away from the island.

"They're not burning the weir, Debbie. They're driving herring."

Once more he was running silently across the sheep-cropped turf, this time toward the dinghy drawn up on the beach.

"I'll go with you, Gid!"

"No, Debbie, I'd not have you with me, for there's like to be trouble."

Leaping into the boat, he seized the oars and rowed out into the harbor.

On the beach stood Debbie, her white arms stretched toward him through the dark.

He rowed with long powerful strokes straight for the ledges. As quietly as possible he dipped his oars into the black water, and cursed the creaking thole-pins. Closer and closer came that blazing torch. He was in the ledges at last, pulling for the Thumbcap Weir.

Over his shoulder he saw the flame diminish and

the glimmering remnant of the torch fall into the water. Again came the tiny spurt of a lighted match. Again a torch flared.

Slowly it moved away from the Thumbcap. The sparks fell. The quivering rope of light wriggled down into the black water.

All around him Gid could hear the schools of herring, sweeping on through the channel, blindly following the blazing torch away from the Thumbcap Weir.

Gid saw the figure of a man, black in the flickering light. He leaned on his oars, waiting. The tide slapped softly against the sides of the boat. The rushing whisper of the herring filled the night.

Then the black figure turned. Above the flaring torch Gid saw the face of young Tony Luti.

His eyes were intent on the burning birch bark in his hand. Over the stern of the boat, he held it. And behind him, rowing slowly, leading the herring away from the Thumbcap Weir, Gid saw the gleaming eyes and black beard of old Tony.

Again Gid's oars swept the black water. Closer to that flickering light he came.

Quietly he shipped his oars and left one lying across the thwarts. Then standing in the bow he paddled silently closer.

Still young Tony's eyes were fixed on the crack-

ling strip of birch bark in his hand. His face, usually dull and vacant, was lighted with a kind of ecstasy. Behind him his father rowed steadily, leading the school of herring away from the weir.

Old Tony was the first to see Gid as he paddled out of the encircling night.

"Throw it away," he snarled quickly to his son.

The boy turned toward him with the torch, but still he watched the crackling flame with unheeding fascination.

"Drop it, you fool!" snarled old Tony again.

As he spoke he lifted his oar and struck the torch from the boy's hand. Across the water, Gid heard his startled cry of pain, and saw the torch drop sizzling into the water and flicker out.

In a moment the creak of oars and the sound of churning water showed him the direction of Tony Luti's flight.

"You'll have cause to be sorry for this, Tony Luti," he shouted into the night. "It'll not be the law that'll settle this!"

He was rowing furiously after the retreating boat. The ledges were behind him, clear water ahead. Now they were rounding the end of the Thumbcap.

"We'll settle this between us, Tony Luti," he called hotly.

In the quiet night came the sound of Tony's engine starting. Gid put his last reserve of strength on the oars. The black water flew past his gunwale.

But the beat of Tony's power boat sounded across the widening distance. Gid leaned on his oars, listening.

At last he rowed back into Deadman's Harbor.

In the star-dim night, the sweeping schools of herring were cutting through the black water toward the Thumbcap Weir.

XVIII

"THERE'S little use in trying to settle this while the tides are on and the herring are striking," Gid decided the next morning. "I'll wait, Debbie. For if I go to Harbor By Chance now, it'll cost us high for the tide we miss. And if I go out on the Race to see Tony, it'll decide nothing. I'll be settling it with him alone!"

Debbie's gray eyes were sad, even after the big catch in the Thumbcap Weir that morning.

"How will you be settling it, Gid?" she asked hesitantly.

"I cannot tell, Debbie. If it comes to blows it'll not be the first time there's been blows between us. But when I've done, Tony Luti 'll give the Thumbcap a wide berth."

They stood on the beach below the camp. The seine had been hung on the seine reel in the harbor. The sardine boat from the cannery was out of sight. They were alone on Deadman's Island.

"Gid, there'll be fear in my heart for your meeting. Let the fishery inspector in the shiretown know that Tony's been driving herring. It'll be enough."

"It'll settle nothing, Debbie, no more than it did when the sheep were killed. I'll fight my own battle this time."

"There'll be fear in my heart," she repeated, turning toward the camp. "You've a hot temper, Gid lad, that grows hotter for brooding as the days go on. And Tony Luti has neither conscience nor fear of the law to hold his hand. I'd have you stay apart."

She walked slowly across the green turf. The sunlight was warm on her bright bowed head. Gid watched her until she closed the door of the camp behind her.

Through the days that followed, their hearts were heavy. There was no song on Debbie's lips as she worked about the camp under the mountain, and Gid's face was grim as he went on with the building of the new room.

Even their sunset hour on the mountain top was shortened. For as the fleet returned from the Race their eyes were drawn to the black power boat bound for Harbor By Chance.

They watched her slip by on the other side of Hardwood Island, with a bone in her teeth, and a wake of curling foam.

As they watched, Gid's hands would clench on the piece of sandstone he was holding. Debbie's

eyes would cloud and she would lay a quiet hand on his shoulder.

At last they ceased to climb the path past the cold spring as the sun sank low over the bay. Gid went on with his building, and Debbie with her small tasks in the camp under the mountain.

When darkness lay over the islands of the Passamaquoddy, there was the Thumbcap Weir to guard. A careful watch night after night they kept. Together they walked down the point to the edge of the crawling tide, and scanned the dim reaches of the harbor.

"You're tired, Debbie," said Gid one night, as she stood beside him there. "Sleep now, and I'll watch alone."

"I've no liking for the thought of you waiting here alone," she said. Her face was a pale oval in the darkness, and her arms a white dimness at her sides.

Then through the hours of the flood until it was time to put the drop on the weir, Gid made quiet trips down to the point to look for a torch blazing in the Thumbcap Weir. And when the sun was high, and the seining of the weir was done, they both slept for weariness.

The week drew on. Each day the tide turned an hour later, until the flood was in the light of day,

and the herring stayed outside the mouth of the weir.

"The tides are off, and it's time for us to go to Harbor By Chance," Gid said then. "I'd be seeing Tony Luti there."

They closed the door of the camp behind them and snapped the padlock shut.

"It's a strange day when we feel the need of a lock on our door," Debbie commented.

In and out among the islands of the Passamaquoddy they made their way to Harbor By Chance.

"We'll stop at the wharf in the settlement," Gid decided. "For I'd lose no time now till I have it out with him."

Before they left the wharf with its flakes of drying hake, they had word of Tony.

"He's gone away," they were told. "It's the foreign blood that's in them, a roving blood that keeps them going. You'll mind that Liz was in the States for awhile, till she came back and went to work up river. She's loading pulp now, and it's only young Tony and his mother that's home."

"Where is it that Tony's gone?" demanded Gid.

"Across the line to Eastport and Lubec, or maybe as far as Portland—who can be telling?"

Gid and Debbie climbed down the slimy ladder to their boat and headed for the upper farm.

"He's run away," Gid said. "He knows well enough that the law's heavy on a man for driving herring."

"I'm thankful that he's gone away, Gid lad. I was fearing for what would happen when you saw him. But the fear has left me now."

The salt wind was in their faces, and Debbie's head was high.

"It's settled now," she added. "We needn't fear for the Thumbcap again, I'm thinking."

"Not till Tony comes back to the islands," said Gid. "But he'll be coming back, Debbie. Tony will be coming back."

It was with a feeling of lessened tension, however, that Debbie came home to the upper farm. Fragrant with alders and wild roses, the house seemed to her a shelter sweet with the peace of summer.

Upper Archie's kindly eyes welcomed her back with a light which lasted long after his quiet words of greeting. He listened to the story which she and Gid told him of the night when Tony Luti was driving herring from the mouth of the Thumbcap Weir.

"It's a sore trouble to me," he said, "that the shadow of his hate should be over you. I mind the day a year ago when I told Gid the weir would be

his on his wedding day, and how I thought it would bring you joy. But it's brought nothing but trouble to you, I'm thinking . . . nothing but trouble since you've owned it."

The gray gentle Scotsman walked with stooped shoulders and slow step to the window and looked out over the waving acres of hay.

"The year has made him an old man, Debbie," said Gid later in the day. "This week that the tides are off, it may be right for us to stay here on the mainland. For it's time for the haying, and though Peter MacQuarrie from the middle farm will help with the work, my hands'll be needed too."

"Ay, Gid. It would be a sad day if you went back to the island when he was needing you," agreed Debbie.

For the next few days they left the thought of the weir behind them. From daylight to dark, Gid Wyn and Peter MacQuarrie worked on the fields of the upper farm, and the clashing of the mowing machine mingled with the slow hum of bees in the great symphony of summer.

It was the week of the kirk picnic, a fish supper on the beach a few miles up the river, and the young folk of Harbor By Chance were eager for the annual merrymaking.

"But it's a wasteful thing, I'm thinking, to spend

a day in picnicking alone," Janet MacQuarrie declared sternly. "I'd not be blaming you for it, Debbie, for you've been much alone on the island, and it'll do you good, I'm thinking. But there's work for me to be doing at home, and I'll stay home to do it."

Later she remembered the blueberry barrens.

"The heaths are close to the beach," she said thoughtfully. "I could be taking my pails with me and it wouldn't be a day wasted after all."

So it was that Janet MacQuarrie was among the crowd gathered on front of the kirk on the day of the picnic.

With her bright tin pails she climbed up on the hayrack with the others, ready for the drive along the dusty river road. Mrs. Duncan was there, and the Stones, and most of the other families of Harbor By Chance. The women carried pickles and preserves and cakes to add to the fish and potatoes which would be boiled on the beach. As many men as could leave their weirs and farms had joined the picnic crowd.

Debbie saw many friends of her own age, the girls who had been at the supper on her wedding day.

But the hayracks were mainly filled with the children of Harbor By Chance, who shouted with

delight as the drivers cracked the whip over the horses and they went rattling along on their way to the beach.

Over the sunlit road they went swaying and shouting, through keen-scented woods and clover-sweet pastures to the road that turned off through the blueberry barrens to the beach.

There they were met by the minister, who had driven down from up river. Janet MacQuarrie climbed down with her pails, and, with a word of greeting to the minister, she turned into the great stretch of low bushes heavy with blueberries, while the hayracks rattled on to the beach.

When Debbie came up from the beach she found her there, milking the bushes of their weight of fruit.

"I'll take the other bucket, Aunt Janet," she offered.

She sat down nearby. In a moment the blue-frosted berries were hammering into the bucket in front of her.

She laid her broad-brimmed straw hat aside. A little wind crept across the blue acres and lifted the strands of red gold that curled on her temples. The sun blazed in the hot sky over the blueberry heaths.

They talked quietly from time to time, of the

farms, of the weir, of the people of Harbor By Chance.

Debbie told her aunt of the new room which Gid was building on the camp.

"It'll be a fine camp when it's finished," she said proudly. "We'll be taking you to the island to see it."

They moved on to another clump of bushes, and again began milking the berries within reach of their arms. Around them, blue acres stretched away under the sun.

"We'll be needing the new room when we get a man to tend the weir with Gid," Debbie went on.

"He shouldn't be waiting long to find that man," said Janet MacQuarrie sternly. "It's no work for you to be doing, Debbie."

Debbie's fingers raked the bushes. The blueberries rained steadily into her bucket.

"There's joy in the work," she said quietly at last. "It's a fine thing to be hauling on the seine with Gid in the early morning, with the sun coming through the fog, and the gulls crying all around."

"It's no work for a woman, Debbie."

"It's work I've been glad to do. But I'm fearing I'll not be tending the weir with Gid till the end of the fall run, Aunt Janet."

She paused to brush back the hair from her forehead. Again she went on stripping the bushes of their blueberries.

"You've been a mother to me," she said simply. "It's right you should be knowing that we're to have a child."

They talked for a long time, sitting there on the warm earth beside the blueberry bushes. The buckets were left standing half full. The sun sank lower in the sky.

"Of course you'll not be thinking any more of seining the weir with Gid," Janet MacQuarrie said at last.

"It'll be hard to find a man to do it, I'm thinking," Debbie replied.

"There's my son Peter who'll do it," declared Janet MacQuarrie.

Debbie began again her deft milking of the blueberry bushes.

"I'd thought of Peter," she admitted. "But he's been helping Uncle Archie on the upper farm, and I'd be slow to ask him to do more for us."

"Who could he better be helping than his own people?" Janet MacQuarrie demanded. "Peter will be tending the weir with Gid when you go back to the island."

They picked silently for a few minutes.

"It's not that I'm ungrateful, Aunt Janet," Debbie said hesitantly. "But I'd thought to go on with the seining for a little."

Janet MacQuarrie looked at the troubled face of the girl beside her.

"And Gid—would he be letting you, Debbie?"

"I've not told Gid," Debbie replied.

"But when you tell him, Debbie, he'll never let you seine the weir another tide. If he does I'll not think high of Gid Wyn."

Debbie's pail was filled to the brim. Her hands were quiet in her lap, as she looked out over the blue acres.

"You'd not harm your child, Debbie?" said Janet MacQuarrie at last.

"You know that I'd not do that," Debbie replied quietly.

"Then you'll not seine the Thumbcap Weir again," said Janet MacQuarrie briefly.

So it was settled that Peter MacQuarrie should come to Deadman's Island when the haying on the upper farm was done.

With brimming buckets they walked back to the beach road. The alder leaves were dusty after the long dry days, and a few late roses growing wild by the fence were dropping their petals with slow fluttering.

They walked side by side at the edge of the road, the stern, gaunt woman and the quiet-faced girl. They walked slowly as Janet MacQuarrie told Debbie of the first MacQuarrie born after the farm had been cleared on the Fundy.

"I've heard it often, Debbie, though with no mother to tell you, you may never have heard at all of how the baby came a little time too soon, and Jean MacQuarrie—your great grandmother, Debbie—was all alone in the farm house with her nearest neighbor near five miles away through the woods.

"It was snowing and the drifts were deep on the road and Jean MacQuarrie was alone. So she prayed, Debbie, for someone to come, while the snow was falling and falling.

"And when she had prayed and waited she saw a woman coming through the snowdrifts. It was her neighbor woman from five miles away. She said she had felt that she was needed there on the MacQuarrie farm. She had remembered that Jean MacQuarrie's time was nearly come, and she was alone. So she came through the snow that day. . . . God is good, Debbie!"

So talking quietly in the summer afternoon they came at last to the beach. There the children were running and playing and the women were sitting

with their sewing in the cool shade of the trees near by.

The men, who had left their weirs and farms that day, were already gathering wood for the fire. Soon the bonfires on the beach were lighted, and in iron pots fresh haddock was boiling and potatoes in the same water, so that the same salt flavor should be through it all.

Table-cloths were laid on the grass at the head of the beach, and on the cloths were laid the jams and pickles and other delicacies that the women had brought.

They sat on the ground at last, hungry and waiting. And when the minister had asked the blessing, their plates were heaped high, and even their bread and butter of every day was strangely delicious as they ate it in the open air.

The sun went down back of the woods and blueberry barrens. The river brimming at high tide was a shimmering surface of opal light. Far away a white throat whistled.

In the green twilight that followed, they gathered the dishes and tablecloths, and the fragments of the supper and stored them away in the hayracks.

The horses, grazing contentedly under the trees, were put between the shafts. Again they climbed

into the hayracks and found places on the soft brown hay.

The children, sunburned and tired, raised their shout of happiness as the hayracks started down the road. When they reached the corner, the minister's buggy turned up river and the hayracks toward Harbor By Chance.

The dusk deepened. The stars were lighted one by one. Through the summer night the hayracks rattled on toward the settlement.

A cow blundered into the road ahead, and moved out of the way with startled fright at the children's shout. In the dim light they saw a rabbit leap into the woods.

Someone started a song, and the other hayracks took it up. Singing they rode homeward.

When they reached the upper farm Debbie waved good night to the laughing crowd. They rattled on again through the dark, leaving her standing by the road-side. Then letting down one of the bars, she climbed through into the lane.

When she opened the kitchen door, Gid and Upper Archie were talking quietly. They smiled their eager welcome as she stood in the doorway, slim and cool and quiet-eyed, with her hat in her hand and the lamp-light on her coiled gold braids.

"It was a fine picnic," she said as she sat down

beside them. "Aunt Janet brought home a fine lot of blueberries from it, too."

She told them who had been at the picnic, and what had been served at the supper under the trees. In their turn they told her of their day in the fields, and how they had crossed the big brook and mowed south to the edge of the woods.

"It's good weather for haying, too," said Upper Archie contentedly. "Fine dry weather, that I hope will hold till we have the hay in the mow."

With talk of the fields and the day's work and plans for the work of the morrow, they sat for awhile content.

At last they fell silent. They could hear the crickets, loud in the summer night. Debbie's head rested on the back of her chair, the creamy line of her throat and chin gleaming in the lamplight.

There would be work again with the daylight and few enough hours for sleep. With a glance at the clock, Debbie rose and lighted another lamp. Carrying it with her, she went with a quiet word of good night through the doorway.

It was not long before Gid followed her. They could hear Upper Archie moving about downstairs, then with slow footsteps coming up to his room. At last the upper farm was silent.

They spoke in low tones while Debbie brushed

the gleaming mass of her hair and plaited it again in two smooth braids. When at last they blew out the light they stood for a moment at the window looking over the dim mown fields.

It was then that Debbie told Gid of the child that was theirs.

The sweetness of the mown hay filled the summer night. The swelling chorus of the crickets measured the dim quietness.

"It is good, Debbie," said Gid simply.

Janet MacQuarrie's phrase came to Debbie's lips.

"God is good," she said.

XIX

IT was strange to have Peter MacQuarrie on the island with them, so used were Gid and Debbie to the quiet round of their days and nights alone; strange in the cold daylight before the seining of the weir to have another share their breakfast and in the long hours after noon to know another tramped the beaches or climbed the mountain side.

"Yet his father and mine were cousins after all," Debbie reminded herself and Gid. "It's one from our own family in the house with us."

In the days that followed they grew accustomed to the broad-shouldered young man who had helped Upper Archie in the fields of the upper farm and now was tending the Thumbcap Weir from tide to tide.

The strangeness of his presence wore away while the mellow days of late summer slipped into the crisp gold days of the fall of the year.

In the warm hollows of the Thumbcap the blue flag waved, and on the mountain the berries of the roundwood trees turned red as the cool breath of autumn swept the bay.

"I've little hope that the fall run of herring'll be good," Gid said one day to Debbie and Peter. "It's not the way of luck to last, and the Thumbcap's been stocking too well through the summer to do as well in the fall of the year, I'm thinking."

But as the pigments of autumn touched the maples of the Passamaquoddy to scarlet and gold, the herring still swept into the bay. Tide by tide the Thumbcap trapped its share of darting fish. The sardine boats from the packers stood by for the catch, and because the weirs of the Passamaquoddy were few, the prices still held high.

Tide after tide Gid and Peter rowed ashore from the seining of the weir with a glad tale of herring caught and herring sold to tell to Debbie waiting in the camp. Debbie, busy now with sewing for her child, listened and was glad.

"Though I'd like fine to be hauling on the seine with you in the cold morning," she said wistfully to them.

Only among the line fishermen on the Race was there discontent as the fall run of herring continued. Those whose weirs had gone down before the ice, and who had not rebuilt in the spring, talked often of the luck which might have been theirs. A lean winter stretched ahead for them instead.

Some, as they rocked in the long swells of the Race, spoke without rancor.

"Another year and better luck," they said. "It's a long lane that has no turning."

But some heard the news of the catches in the Thumbcap and the other weirs in bitter silence. When they spoke, their words were bitter.

"Another year'll never bring a run of herring like this, nor the luck that's coming now to them that don't deserve it any more than we do."

Then one morning the black painted boat of old Tony Luti's was back with the fleet of line fishermen in the Race. He listened sullenly to the talk of the other men. Bit by bit they fed his jealousy, there on the heaving tide of the Race.

"There's a lot in what Tony says. The MacQuarries are a proud and greedy lot," they called from boat to boat. "And Gid Wyn's one of them in that."

Even those who bore no ill feeling toward Gid fanned the flame of discontent. It was an amusing game for them to watch his sullen anger when they told him of a good catch in the Thumbcap Weir.

"I hear there are fifteen hogsheads in the Thumbcap today, Tony," one would say, nudging his fellow.

"Your friend Gid Wyn's doing well," the second man would chuckle.

"When he couldn't find anyone but his wife to tend the weir for him, you might have asked for the job yourself, Tony. Then you'd have had half the stock at least," grinned another as he baited his line and dropped it overboard.

Winking at each other they watched him viciously bite his plug of tobacco, and listened to his angry muttering.

Echoes of these conversations came now and then to Gid and Debbie on the island.

"But the fear of your life itself, Gid lad, would be in me every minute of the day, if I thought you were waiting to settle the trouble with Tony in one hot hour," Debbie said.

For Gid, the dispute concerning the Thumbcap Weir had dropped from first importance before the thought of the child that would be his. So he listened and agreed to Debbie's plea for peace.

Measured by the ebb and flow of the Fundy tide, the days marched on. Indian Summer was upon the land, a smoky interlude of warmth, dividing the sharp weeks of autumn. In the weekly paper from the shiretown Gid read aloud of the damage the continued dry weather had done to the late crops, and of forest fires raging in Upper Canada. They

talked of the herring in the Thumbcap, and of going back to Harbor By Chance at the end of the fall run. They talked of everything save Tony Luti, but the cloud of his hate loomed ever in their horizon, a threatened darkening of their days.

Again the cold bright days began. Goldenrod flared on the islands, and above the beach was the soft smoke of the late blooming purple asters.

It was then that the dark day came, the day of brass which broke on the Passamaquoddy.

In the camp under the mountain they ate their breakfast by lamp-light, though the hour for lamp-light was past. For darkness lay over the earth and above was a brazen sky.

When their meal was finished they went out of doors into a still, strange world. No birds were abroad with song and flutter of wings. Even the crying of the gulls was hushed, and in the breathless silence only the blast of the foghorn sounded monotonously.

"When we were putting the drop-net on the weir, we saw no sign that the day would not be like other days," said Gid with lowered voice.

"It's an eclipse of the sun, maybe," suggested Peter.

"The almanac would be telling that," Gid remembered.

But when they took the almanac from its place in the camp and searched its pages by lamp-light, they decided it could not be.

"There was an eclipse last week visible in China," Gid read. "But it couldn't be this, I'm fearing."

"Unless they figured it wrong somehow, or unless it got delayed," agreed Peter doubtfully.

They went out again into the strange metallic light of the morning.

"It's likely we've come to the end of the world," Debbie decided. " 'The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall.' It's the warning in the Book."

They stood in silence at a little distance from the camp. Over the harbor was the dull gleam of the awful sky.

"Even if it's the end of the world, there's no better thing to do than the day's work," Gid said at last. "We'd best be seining the weir, I'm thinking. It'll do no harm."

"There's little chance that the boats from the canneries'll leave the wharf this day," protested Peter.

"We'll blow the conch shell for them, and if they come, it is good. If no boat comes, we can take the drop-net off and let the herring swim free."

As Gid spoke he turned toward the beach. Deb-

bie walked with him and Peter to the water's edge and watched them shove off into the harbor.

"Even the lamp burns with a queer white light," commented Gid, looking back to the camp.

"Are you smelling the queer smell in the air," Debbie asked. "A smell of smoke—but not like smoke. It's the smell of wet ashes, perhaps, of ashes with water poured on them—like the night of the great gale, Gid, when you were putting out the fire in the stove."

"It's a queer day, with the light of the sky and the darkness and the smell," agreed Gid. "But we'll be seining the weir."

As Debbie turned back to the camp, they rowed out to the seine reel in the harbor.

When, bearing the seine, they reached the Thumbcap Weir, Gid put the horn to his lips and sent the ringing call out under the lurid sky.

They waited in the mouth of the weir. At last one boat glided up beyond the brush topmasts, and on the morning of the dark day, Gid Wyn and Peter MacQuarrie seined the Thumbcap Weir.

The men on the boat from the cannery brought word of the terror the day had brought on the mainland.

"The women are crying," they said. "And the men are standing dumb with no heart in them to

go out on the bay for fish. Along the wharves there are groups of people wondering what the day can be. But they're needing sardine herring in the factories and when they called for men to go, we weren't with them that held back."

There was a note of conscious bravery in their voices. But when they had told of the fear of the mainland people they fell silent, oppressed by the quiet of the day.

Silently Gid and Peter worked in the weir, hauling on the seine by the dark glare of the copper sky.

When the seine was drawn tight under the leaping mass of herring, they took their dip-nets and poured the thudding silver into the boats where they stood. The silver herring gleamed with the strange burnished light that was over the earth.

When at last the herring were thrown into the hold of the packer's boat, and it had headed for the mainland, they rowed with the dripping seine to the great rack standing skeleton-like in the harbor. They wound the seine upon it, and pulled for shore.

Still the lamp shone strangely white from the window of the camp, and now they saw another light bobbing on the mountain side.

"That will be Debbie with the lantern," said Gid.

Peter kept on to the camp and Gid walked slowly up the mountain path.

As he left the cropped turf for the root-ribbed path beneath the firs, the darkness was about him. Through the boughs he caught glimpses of the lighted sky, but as he stumbled over a projecting root, he saw why Debbie had carried the lantern that her feet might not stumble in the dim way.

Up the mountain side he went to the cold spring. There Debbie had left her bucket and gone on. Gid climbed after her through the dark woods.

As he left the shadow of the firs and approached the bald crest of the mountain, he saw her standing there. Her lantern was still in her hand as she stood looking out over the bay, motionless amid the great stillness of the dark morning.

Gid was about to speak to her, when from the shadowed firs the sheep came softly.

So still was Debbie, they came treading with sure footsteps over the rock; they came unafraid to her very feet.

She moved then, but so slowly and so steadily, that the sheep took the downward path still unalarmed. Against the brazen sky she moved, with the lantern in her hand and the sheep at her feet.

And over the mountain and the bay the foghorn sounded everlastingly.

As she approached the edge of the wood, she saw Gid waiting for her. Side by side they took the way down the mountain side. At the cold spring, Gid plunged the pail into the water, and carried its brimming weight down the root-ribbed path to the camp under the mountain.

The morning of that day of brass wore on. But when the sun should have been noon-high, darkness still was over the earth and the sky was a burnished metal bowl.

At noonday came a change in the light.

"Perhaps the day will be breaking now," Gid said hopefully.

They waited through the early afternoon. The dulled fire of the sky became gray ash. Gray light was on the earth. And it was day.

Again small living things were stirring. The tawny-breasted cliff swallows swerved around the mountain. Gulls hung between heavy clouds and leaden bay.

With the coming of that cold gray light there was movement again on the surface of the Passamaquoddy. The boats from Harbor By Chance and the island settlements chugged out from their moorings.

One or two headed for Deadman's Island, and their owners sat for a little while in the camp,

talking to Debbie and Gid and Peter about the strangeness of the day.

"There's none can say what this day was," they declared. "It'll be a big night in Peg's Hole, for they'll be coming from all the islands of the bay to talk the queer thing over, and every man among them will be needing a drink to put a man's temper into him again."

Debbie would have laid extra plates on the cloth of unbleached linen, but they would not stay for supper.

"It may be along the wharves at Eastport they'll know a way to explain it. We'll be going there," they said. "And maybe there'll be someone at Peg's Hole tonight who'll know. You'd best be coming yourself to see."

Gid did not stay them to explain his constant guarding of the Thumbcap since the night Tony Luti had been driving herring with his birch bark torch. But at his refusal, they called back as they shoved off into the harbor.

"Then we'll bring you word of it, if there's any way to explain the queer dark day."

When darkness fell, like the darkness of other nights, the three in the camp under the mountain sat down to their supper.

From a great kettle of clams, steamed in their

shells, they piled their plates high. Steamed clams dipped in melted butter, and afterward cups of clam water, fragrant and hot, with bread and sweetcake too—this was their evening meal. When they had eaten and pushed back their chairs, Debbie cleared the table and washed the dishes, then sat down beside the lamp with her sewing.

The camp was snug and warm with the fire in the stove. They were quiet, but for the rustle of the newspaper from the shiretown as Gid turned the page, or the snap of the thread as Debbie's glinting needle reached the end of a seam, or an occasional word from Peter MacQuarrie as he untangled a fish line patiently.

"The tide'll be turning soon," said Gid at last with a glance at the clock. "It'll be a good night for herring, I'm thinking."

Now and then they heard the chugging of an engine as a power boat crossed the bay, feeling its way through the fog between the islands and the ledges of the Passamaquoddy.

"A good night for herring, but a dirty night for a boat," said Peter then. "They'll have a hard crossing through Letete, those men that come back from Peg's Hole half drunk tonight."

Dead low water, then flood tide.

"We'll have to put the drop-net on the weir

early enough without losing our sleep the first of the night," said Gid, putting away his paper. "I'd be sleeping now if they hadn't been telling us they'd come ashore if they heard any man explain the queer dark day."

"I've no thought they'll hear any man explain it," Debbie said quietly. "We'll have no more visitors tonight, and the night is getting on. It's time we were sleeping."

She folded her sewing and carried it into the new room. Gid opened the outer door, and the chill fall night swept into the lamp-lit camp.

"I can hear a power boat to the south of us, and another to the west of Hardwood Island; but they come no nearer—unless the boat to the south is heading for the harbor."

He listened intently, then closing the door behind him, walked across the cropped turf to high water mark, the better to hear the distant power boat.

In the camp Peter was putting away his fish lines, and Debbie was moving quietly about the inner room.

It was Peter who first saw Gid's face as he threw open the door.

"Gid, what is it that's happened?" he cried, starting toward him.

The sharp question brought Debbie to the door

of the inner room. Swiftly she crossed to Gid's side and laid her hand on his arm.

"What is it, Gid?" she said.

He shook his arm free, and stared at them both unseeingly. His dark eyes blazed in a face white and strained.

"Tony's at it again," he told them. "There's a torch at the mouth of the Thumbcap."

They pressed forward into the foggy night. Around the corner of the camp and down to the point they ran. The stunted firs pricked them as they stumbled on. But when they reached the point, they saw the blurred red flare of the torch in the mouth of the Thumbcap Weir.

"Take the net boat, Peter, around the end of the Thumbcap. It's where he left his power boat before. And I'll take the dinghy the other way through the ledges. . ."

They heard Gid's voice as he ran toward the beach. Peter was running after him to the boats, and for a moment Debbie stood alone, shut in by the fog among the stunted firs.

"Gid," she cried. "Gid lad, stay back. . ."

She, too, was running in the dark. The cropped turf beneath her feet changed to the pebbled beach; the loose pebbles to bursting slippery seaweed.

She heard the scraping of the keels as Gid and

Peter shoved off. She stood at last at the edge of the crawling tide, the cold black water at her feet.

"Gid lad. . ." she sobbed.

As she spoke, she felt his arm about her waist. He ran, half carrying her, up the beach.

"Go into the camp, Debbie, and shut the door!" he commanded. "And wait in the camp until we're back again. You'll be hurting the child."

"And do you think I'll not be hurting the child, Gid, if I'm sick with terror for you? It's the end of the year and we've had herring enough in the Thumbcap Weir to feed us the winter through. We've had herring enough if Tony Luti is driving them every night from the mouth of the weir. He's mad with hate, laddie, and there's no telling what he'll do. . . I'll be sick with fearing for you, Gid. . ."

She clutched his shoulders as she pleaded with him. They heard the beat of power boats crossing from Peg's Hole where the men of the islands had been talking of the queer dark day.

On Deadman's Harbor, Peter MacQuarrie waited with his oars in the thole-pins while Debbie was begging Gid to stay.

"Can't you be seeing, Debbie, that it's just because Tony's mad with hate that we've got to be settling it now? For every day we're more in danger,

you yourself, Debbie, and the weir that'll be feeding us other years and feeding the little one that's coming! Go into the camp, Debbie, and wait."

Because she was still clinging to him while the torch blazed in the mouth of the weir, Gid's voice was stern.

"You were promising in the kirk to obey, Debbie. You'll obey me now, for I'm knowing what I have to do."

Then Debbie was alone in the fog. She heard Gid running back to the beach. She heard the creak of the oars as he and Peter rowed out into the harbor.

And she went into the cabin, with her bright head bowed in the lamp-light, weeping.

Through the fog Gid rowed toward that blurred moving flame across the ledges. Peter's oars were muffled by distance as he rounded the end of the Thumbcap. But through the curtain of fog sounded the long note of the foghorn and the sharp beat of power boats in the bay.

"He was sly as a fox to pick this night to come," Gid said aloud. "A night when the sound of a boat would never be noticed and people would be minding nothing but the queer dark day."

Over his shoulder he could see the ragged red light of the torch, clearer now with the lessening distance. He was in the ledges, feeling his way

through the channel. Once he felt a shuddering jar as his dinghy for a moment was aground. Then once more he floated free. Barely an hour high, the tide was still low enough for the sheep to be crossing the ledges. He could see the blurred line picking its way to the Thumbcap.

Little by little he nosed past the jagged rocks where the tide sucked through the ledges. When he reached open water he pulled with long strokes for the Thumbcap. And at a little distance the blazing torch moved slowly through the fog.

Gid made no attempt to muffle the sound of his coming. Swift and more swiftly the water washed past the gunwale as his oars swept the black tide.

Then in the red flare of the torch the curtain of fog was torn aside, and he saw Tony Luti, with young Tony with him in the boat.

He shouted blindly at them across the water. At his shout the torch fell, and around him was the night and the fog.

He heard their oars in the thole-pins. Through the fog they were rowing as swiftly as he. Across the water came the high-pitched laughter of young Tony, stirred by the excitement of the chase.

"There they go, Peter. Head them off!" shouted Gid.

His voice was loud in the darkness, and when he

had spoken there was only the distant beat of power boats sounding through the fog.

The men of the Passamaquoddy were coming back from Peg's Hole to their homes in Harbor By Chance and the settlements of Deer Island at the end of the strange dark day.

They were creeping into Deadman's Harbor, feeling their way through the fog. And through the veil of gray, one had seen Tony Luti's torch burning with a dull red glow. He had heard Gid's shout across the water, and had seen the flare die into the darkness of the night.

"There's trouble yonder," he shouted in his turn.

"There's queer business afoot," came the hail from another power boat.

Their voices, faint in the distance, floated across the harbor to Gid, rowing through the night and the fog after old Tony Luti. But the words were blurred by distance, and tense with the chase, he paid no heed.

Only Debbie, waiting in the lamp-lit camp, heard the hail from the approaching power boat, and knew that it was putting into the harbor—knew it from the nearness of their voices though she had no window to enable her to peer toward them through the fog.

She hurried to the door to send these strangers to

Gid's aid, but, with her hand on the latch, remembered they might well be dazed and hot-headed with the liquor of Peg's Hole. Her hand fell to her side as she hesitated. Then crossing the room, she blew out the light.

Closer came the beat of power boats in the fog, until they nosed silently toward the rocks of Deadman's Island.

"It's off toward the Thumbcap we were seeing the light," one man shouted.

"A torch it was—a blazing torch," cried another.

"Like as not Gid's driving herring, not content with what his weir's stocked already."

Harsh laughter sounded through the fog.

"We might have been knowing before this that the Thumbcap's been stocking too much for it to be honest business."

"You're quick with your slurs," protested another voice. "You'd best wait a little till you know what's going on here."

Dark figures moved through the fog. There came a step at the threshold and a shove against the bolted door.

"They've gone," he called to the others.

Slapping his hands against his thighs to keep warm, he stumbled over a pile of driftwood.

"Here's wood for a fire," he called.

Others came to the pile of driftwood at the door. They carried it away in armfuls, shouting and laughing.

There was a snatch of deep-voiced song. Then at the foot of the fir-dark mountain a piece of birch bark burst into flame. The flame leaped higher in the night until the piled driftwood was ablaze. In the red cavern of light, black figures moved to and fro.

Steadily sounded the unending tones of the foghorn from the Wolves; and over the dark harbor rowed Gid Wyn and Peter MacQuarrie, bringing old Tony and the boy ashore.

XX

AT the grating of keels on the beach, several figures in the red light of the bonfire broke away.

"He's come ashore," came the cry. "It's Gid, right enough."

"It's Tony Luti with him, old Tony himself. . ."

Their voices rang sharply in the night as they went running through the fog to the beach.

"Old Tony and the boy . . . and Peter MacQuarrie. . .What is it that's been happening here?"

The confused questions stopped as the group of men came into the circle of firelight.

In the center was old Tony Luti, bound with the painter from the dinghy. On his right hand was Peter MacQuarrie; on his left, Gid Wyn. Close behind them followed young Tony with his vacant face alight for the moment with interest and excitement.

Gid let go his hold on old Tony's arm as the crowd of fishermen surrounded him. His white face was unsmiling as he turned to them.

"This is a matter for me to be settling alone. . . I'll stand for no interference from any man!"

The firelight picked from the darkness the faces of his neighbors at Harbor By Chance. There was Robert Duncan, flushed and bareheaded. There was Robert's father, Angus Duncan. There were Gid's two visitors of the afternoon, and beyond them a throng of men from the island settlements.

"There's no man of you has business here. . ." Gid's voice was low and strained.

"We'd business here," spoke up his caller of the afternoon. "We were coming as we'd promised, to tell you what men said of the queer dark day . . . that it was forest fires in Upper Canada reflected on the clouds and the fog. . ."

"We'd business here," laughed another, "when we saw you driving herring into the Thumbcap Weir."

"You lie!" shouted Peter MacQuarrie hotly. "It was Tony Luti you were seeing, driving herring away from the weir."

"We'd have been seeing the truth for ourselves if the tide had been high enough to get a power boat through the ledges," muttered another voice.

"Tony Luti has reason on his side. If he was driving herring, he was only taking his own again!"

"Tony Luti's done harm enough to Gid Wyn and the MacQuarries," came the sudden defense from Robert Duncan. "Wasn't I in it from the start? I'm knowing the truth if any man knows it!"

Their voices rose hotly in the night. They were looking at Robert Duncan, shaking his fist as he shouted at them.

"You've had a drop too much," his father warned him, clutching his shoulder to pull him back. "It's their quarrel. You were canny enough to stay out of it once."

"It's the truth I'm telling you. Gid's been in the right from the beginning . . . from the time Tony killed the sheep. . ." Robert's voice rose insistently.

In the confusion, Gid with a low word to Peter, hurried away. He ran over the springy turf to the camp. The barred door resisted him as he pushed against it.

"Debbie! Open the door. It's Gid."

The inside bolt slid back, and he stepped into the dark camp.

"Put your wrap about you, and take the lantern with you, and go up the mountain, Debbie. . ."

He spoke in whispers as he groped in the dark for the lantern.

"Go in the dark till you're away from the sight of the men yonder," he warned her. "For the feeling's running high among them, and some of them are drunk. . ."

His fingers closed around the handle of the lantern.

"If you go carefully, Debbie, and find the cave behind the stunted fir, you'll be safest there. Here's the lantern, and matches to light it when you're safe away."

For the first time she spoke.

"I'm not fearing for myself. It's for you, Gid lad. What is it that you mean to do?" Her hands gripped his shoulders. "We can get to the boat, you and Peter and I, and be off to Harbor By Chance, the three of us together. . ."

Gid's voice was low and strained in the dark.

"Don't be holding me back, Debbie. For I'm knowing what I have to do."

As he spoke he wrenched her hands from his shoulders and was gone.

A moment later Debbie closed the door behind her and started up the mountain in the dark. Once in the shelter of the firs, she skirted the foot of the mountain until her feet found the path which led up to the spring. Then for fear of the throng of men gathered around the blazing fire below, she climbed upward with her lantern still unlighted.

It was not until the shoulder of the mountain hid the red blaze from her, that she used the matches Gid had given her.

Then by the light of the lantern in her hand she stumbled down the far side of the mountain to the

grove of birches above the crashing waves of the Fundy, where she and Gid had run laughing, hand in hand, on a silver day in May.

At the edge of the cliff she stopped. Below her the waves beat against the jagged rock. Around her was the fog.

"I can never be finding the cave in the dark and the fog," she cried aloud. "Gid was mad to be thinking that I could."

With her lantern still guiding her footsteps she turned back. Through the birch grove, where the wind was a thin crying above her, up the bare rock slope where the stunted firs were clinging, she found her way to the mountain top again. There with her lantern out, she watched the dark moving figures around the blazing fire below.

From the Wolves the foghorn sounded monotonously, and still through the fog came the sharp beat of power boats homeward bound at the end of that day of darkness.

One and then another put into Deadman's Harbor, drawn out of their course by the fire burning through the fog. Running up from the beach and over the cropped turf came men of the islands and men of Harbor By Chance, shouting their questions as they ran.

But as they came within the circle of light a

silence fell on them. For Gid Wyn stood in front of old Tony Luti with a whip in his hand.

His face was white and his voice when he spoke was low.

"For a year you've done naught but harm to me and my people, Tony Luti," he said. "It's a thrashing you get for that tonight. And when I've done you'll be leaving the Passamaquoddy—and you'll not be coming back."

From the throng of men in the firelight rose an amazed murmur. Again their voices were loud in the night.

"What of the harm Tony's had at the hand of Gid and the MacQuarries!"

"Gid deserves a whip to his own hide," growled another.

"He's right, is Gid. A whip's the thing for Tony," defended Robert Duncan stoutly.

Beside the fire, forgetful of the crowd, young Tony Luti stared at the tongues of flame. And through the fog still sounded the beat of power boats homeward bound from Peg's Hole.

"It's the pride of the MacQuarries, with their weirs and their farms. It's little they care for any but their own."

"A greedy lot that'll take a poor man's weir in a hard year. . ."

"And what of the sheep that Tony killed on the Thumbcap not a year past?"

"A whip's none too hard. . ."

In growing conflict the voices rose in the night.

"It's the Thumbcap that fills their flour barrel. He's right to be fighting a man who'd drive herring with a torch. . ."

"But it's Gid, like as not, that's been driving herring every night, and then boasting of the catch in the Thumbcap Weir. . ."

One of Tony's friends cut the rope which bound him. Then with a twist of his powerful shoulders, he wrenched himself free of Peter MacQuarrie's grasp. Squat and black-bearded he stood in the firelight.

"You'll take a whip to me, Gid Wyn! You'll see I've friends here, when you try that. . ."

Around them the men of the islands and Harbor By Chance were a surging, shouting throng.

"That's right, Tony. We'll back you, right enough. . ."

"Fight him, Tony. . . He can't stand up to you. . ."

"Strip his coat off his back, Gid. . . A whip's the thing for him. . ."

Tony seemed to gain confidence with the shouts of his friends.

"You'll take a whip to me, you bastard from the poor-house!"

Gid's face was twisted as he lifted the whip. His eyes shut as it cut the face of the man before him.

Then he flung it from him into the fire, and met the blows of old Tony Luti.

One man lifted a hand to pull him back, and was felled by a blow from Robert Duncan. He jumped to his feet in rage.

"You're one of them," he shouted. "You and Gid with your weirs built, laughing while the rest of us go hungry. . ."

Another took up the cry.

"Another year and you'll not be finding it so healthy, the proud lot of you. . ."

"It's no fault of them that have their weirs up that you weren't building yours. . ."

"No fault of ours that it's a hard year around the shores. . ."

They were fighting under the mountain, each man against his neighbor, blind with hate.

And beside the fire young Tony sat with vacant eyes staring into the red and green flames of the burning driftwood.

Still through the fog sounded the sharp beat of power boats homeward bound from Peg's Hole. One more put into Deadman's Harbor, and over the

rocks and sheep-cropped turf came more men from Harbor By Chance.

They came running toward the milling crowd beside the fire. Someone had caught up the song the children of Harbor By Chance used to taunt young Tony, had taken it up with a change to fling the taunt into the teeth of old Tony and his defenders:

"Old Tony Luti has no comb,
He combs his hair with a codfish bone."

Hurrying up from the beach with stumbling haste came old Lish Penny, taken by a kindly fisherman to Peg's Hole at the end of the queer dark day, and now there with the others under the mountain of Deadman's Island.

He came with his eyes peering toward the dark fighting figures, his hand heavy on his gnarled cane.

"It's the curse on the Passamaquoddy," he cried when he heard their shouts. "It's the curse you get when you gamble with God for bread, when you gamble for herring like silver coins."

They gave no thought to the grizzled man shaking his cane in the fire-light.

Even young Tony Luti had no time to listen. He had pulled a stick from the fire, and was watching the leaping flames at its end.

"Like the balloons," he was saying. "Like bright balloons."

In the hot madness of the moment, Gid Wyn and Tony Luti struggled silently.

"The sheep that you killed, and the twice you were driving herring," muttered Gid, as white-faced he braced himself against the stocky strength of old Tony. "The threats that kept men from tending the weir that fed us. . ."

"I'll have my rights this time. . ." snarled Tony.

Further from the fire Gid Wyn was being forced bit by bit, back toward the high rocks above the beach where the slope of the mountain lifted.

Again came the taunting song:

"Tony Luti's friends they have no sled,
They slide down hill on a codfish head. . ."

Beside the fire, the memory of shrill-voiced taunts from the children of Harbor By Chance lighted the vacant face of young Tony with anger. He turned toward the man whose voice was still lifted in the mocking melody. He raised the burning stick in his hand.

Then once more his eye was caught by the glowing flame, licking the driftwood in tongues of red and green and blue.

"Bright balloons," he repeated. "Bright balloons . . . flying. . ."

As he spoke he flung the burning stick high in the air toward the fir-dark mountain. Hurtling through the dark, it crashed to the ground in the underbrush beyond the circle of firelight.

Young Tony turned back to the bonfire and stared again into its hot depths.

On the rocks high above the beach, Tony Luti and Gid fought on. In the fog with none to see, they stumbled closer and closer to the edge, swaying in breathless combat, with the heat of Gid's youth matched against the hard strength of Tony's squat broad shoulders.

Gid heard his voice in broken sentences.

"The Thumbcap Weir'll be mine after this night . . . the Thumbcap . . . mine. . ."

Hard breathing, lunging, the two men stumbled closer and closer to the edge of the rocks. Below them was the beach, and the long whisper of the tide.

"The Thumbcap Weir'll stock for me. . ."

In the darkness they fought. And in the darkness with none to see, Tony Luti forced Gid back, forced him to the edge of the cliff, and with one last blow, sent him backwards over the edge falling to the rocks below.

He stood for a moment peering after him. In the darkness and fog there was no sound, save the water washing on the rocky beach. Water, crawling slowly. Flood tide.

Tony Luti shook his fist above his head.

"There's the end of your fine talk, you brat from the poor-house. There's the end of your pride and your greed. There on the beach—down there where the tide'll cover you. . ."

He stopped suddenly, listening to the lapping of the tide.

"It'll cover you, Gid Wyn. The sea'll take you—have her man. And I'm safe—safe—"

With a shout of triumph he turned away from the beach. At the foot of the mountain men were fighting, black against the fire. Stumbling in his haste and exhaustion, he ran toward them.

Young Tony, gazing dully into the fire, heard his father shout his name. Back from his vacant staring it called him. Unnoticed, he went with loose hesitant gait into the dark. Unnoticed, another power boat sounded in the harbor and grew faint at last in the distance.

And under the mountain, shouting, cursing, singing, the men of the Passamaquoddy fought, while the foghorn blew from the Wolves in steady monotone.

They did not hear at first the cry from the dark mountain side. Then a shout of alarm rose in their midst.

"The mountain's afire!"

As they looked, the hungry flames racing through the dry underbrush leaped on the shaggy bark of a great birch and roared upward. From tree to tree the fire spread in fury.

A new cry shocked them to sobered horror.

"Look yonder—there's a woman on the mountain. . ."

"It's Gid's wife!"

"It's Debbie!"

Above the burning woods they saw her. She stretched desperate hands to them for help as she sought a downward path. But below her, flames barred the way.

In the glare the men at the foot of the mountain saw her turn again toward the mountaintop. In stumbling flight she was lost in the dark.

"It'll go like tinder. . ."

"It'll sweep the mountain. . ."

"She's finding a way down the cliff on the other side. . ."

They were running now toward the beach, skirting the foot of the mountain where it fell sheer to the harbor, stumbling over jagged rocks as they ran.

Then one of the men in the lead came to a sudden stop. Others crowded about him as he bent over a man lying on the rocks.

"It's Gid himself lying there. . ." someone said in a low tone.

"It's Gid . . . dead. . ."

They stood silent, while behind them fire swept the face of the mountain.

The man bending over Gid arose. It was young Robert Duncan, grim-faced and sober.

"He's near dead, I'm thinking; but he's living yet," said Robert Duncan.

No man looked at his neighbor while they stood there.

"It's blind mad we've been . . ." said one.

Peter MacQuarrie turned away.

"Debbie's on the mountain yonder," he reminded them.

They ran on over the rocky beach, leaving a little group around Gid. The dark mass of the mountain hid the marching flames from them, though the night sky was aglow. Now they could hear the crashing waves of the Fundy.

A loose stone bounded down the cliff.

"She's starting down," came the cry. "She's climbing down the cliff. . ."

"She'll lose her footing. . ."

They stood at the foot of the steep wall of rock, while Debbie was finding the way with slow careful steps. She clung now to a dwarfed fir, now to a shelf of rock.

Peter MacQuarrie left the group at the foot of the cliff and started upward.

"Steady, Debbie," he encouraged her. "It's a little way now you have to go. . ."

Then his hand was helping her. Slowly they crept downward until at last they reached the foot of the cliff.

Debbie searched the faces of the men who were waiting there.

"Gid is not with you," she said simply. "Where is he, Peter?"

Peter MacQuarrie hesitated. It was Angus Duncan who answered.

"He's hurt a little, Debbie lass, and you'd best be going to him in case he has need of you."

She asked no other question as she hurried with them around the base of the mountain.

They came again to the little group on the beach. In the light of the blazing woods she saw Gid lying there.

"Gid . . . Oh, Gid! . . . My own dear lad," she cried.

They made way for her as she ran toward him.

Kneeling on the rocks she called him, brokenly. And at her voice he opened his eyes a moment.

"It's all right, Debbie," he whispered. "Don't be fearing for me any more. . ."

Peter MacQuarrie and Robert Duncan lifted him gently and carried him across the rocky beach to the boats. Behind them walked the others silently.

"He has his youth to pull him through it," said Angus Duncan.

"God give him life!" whispered Debbie.

They had brought his power boat in from the mooring, and now Peter MacQuarrie and Robert Duncan waded into the black water and laid him aboard.

Already the sharp beat of power boats sounded around them in the harbor. Over the mountain roared red fire as they headed for Harbor By Chance.

XXI

THROUGH the windows of the upper farm house came the scent of wet soil from which the frost of the white months was gone, the breath of earth fecund with new life.

Upper Archie had come in to drink from the bucket of cold water in the kitchen. He paused for a moment to look under the hood of the low wooden cradle.

"I'm thinking you're as pleased with the little one as Gid himself," smiled Debbie, serene about her work.

"And why shouldn't I be?" asked Upper Archie seriously. "It's a great wonder to me that I'd be given Gid for a son and you for a daughter and now wee Archie for a grandson, and me thinking to live lonely all my life!"

He went out again into the freshness of the spring morning. Debbie moved lightly about her tasks in the bright kitchen. At length, seeing that the child was sleeping, she took a basket and knife and went out to gather the first dandelion greens for their noonday meal.

At the lower end of the pasture Gid and Upper Archie had spread the seine upon the grass and were mending the rents in its knotted mesh. Near them the cow was feeding and the thin tinkle of her bell came clearly to Debbie's ears in the cool morning.

She carried the basket over a little hill. Then on her knees in the wet grass she clipped the tender greens and filled her basket with them.

On the knoll behind her, sunlight poured on gnarled trees burdened with apple blossoms, and around her spiders had spread their dripping seines upon the grass.

When she again approached the house she heard the crying of the little one and hastened her steps.

The sun climbed high, and when it was noon, Debbie stood in the doorway and called Gid and Upper Archie from their work on the seine. They came to the meal hungry and were glad for the new greens and the fresh boiled haddock.

When they had eaten, they returned to their task. As Gid went out, he stopped to feel the clutch of his young son's fingers on his.

"See how strong he is, Debbie. He'll have a strong arm for hauling on the seine when he's grown, will little Archie."

Upper Archie looked back from the door.

"It'll not be long now till he's building a little weir of his own of sticks and twine down at the edge of the cove. I mind the weir you built when you were a wee thing, Gid, and the day you came running to tell me you'd caught a smelt. . ."

They went down the hill to the spread seine. Their voices were faint in the distance.

In the afternoon Janet MacQuarrie came up from the middle farm to sit awhile with Debbie.

She unwrapped a small package and took out a bit of lace and yellowed linen.

"It's one of the white caps your grandmother used to be wearing," she said. "I've had it in the chest against the day when it would be needed again. When you've bleached it, Debbie, it'll make a fine bonnet for the baby."

They talked quietly as the shadows grew long, speaking now of the weirs which men were building on all the ledges and in all the coves of the Passamaquoddy, and now of their friends in Harbor By Chance, the new goods in the store, and the patterns in the catalogue of the Toronto mail order house.

Janet MacQuarrie's voice grew stern.

"I've had word of the Lutis, Debbie. Yesterday Mrs. Duncan was telling me of them. She had it from a man over the Bocabec Hills who'd just come back from the States. Up Boston way he'd

seen them,—young Tony playing his fiddle in the streets and old Tony taking money from them that would give."

Debbie looked out of the window at Gid and Upper Archie mending the seine in the pasture, at the newly painted boats riding at the mooring, and the glinting water.

"For a long time after the night of the fight, when we were thinking Gid would die, I had the fear in my heart that the Lutis would come back again. But I'm thinking they're gone now, gone for good."

"Ay, Debbie. For now that their house is sold there's nothing to bring them back. And they'd be fearing the men of the islands now, when the feeling ran so high against them after Tony left Gid on the beach to die." She looked kindly at Debbie. "There's few men among the islands now that aren't friends to you and Gid and glad that the year has brought you joy in the end."

Debbie nodded.

"It's all a queer dark dream now, a dream that's gone."

The afternoon sunlight slanted over the pasture, and the shadows of the gnarled apple trees had come close to the house, when Janet MacQuarrie went back to the middle farm.

Before she went, she asked them all to have supper with her on the morrow.

"For the minister will be there too, Debbie, and it's high time you were setting the day for the baby to be christened in the kirk. It isn't fitting to wait too long."

In the green-shadowed dusk Gid and Upper Archie came in and they sat down to their supper together. In the stove a fire cracked its warm cheer, for the night was chill. When the darkness thickened the lamp was lighted.

While Debbie cleared the dishes away, Gid and Upper Archie took the lantern to the barn for the last tasks of the day. And when they came in again, they all sat in the lamp-light with the week's work done.

Gid turned the pages of the newspaper from the shiretown.

"It's saying here that the canneries'll open early this season," he told them.

"It'd be hard for them if there's a poor run of herring now," Upper Archie replied, smoking thoughtfully. "And hard if the prices don't hold up. I'm hoping they'll have their share of luck, the men of the islands that lost last year . . ."

They sat for a little while in silence.

"It's a strange thing," Upper Archie said, "the

hot feeling on the islands last year . . . a strange thing, the way it was. But it's the weirs that fill the flour barrels all along the shores, and it takes little enough to stir a man to jealousy and hate when his flour barrel's empty. It needed only Tony Luti to set them on."

Debbie looked up from her sewing.

"Aunt Janet was bringing word of the Lutis," she said.

Gid and Upper Archie listened eagerly as Debbie told them of the day they had been seen up Boston way.

"Young Tony was always a great hand for his fiddle," Gid commented. "But to think of them giving money for his tunes . . . That's a queer thing."

From the cradle came the sudden wail of the baby. Debbie dropped her sewing on the table and hurried to take him up.

"It was a queer dark dream, the whole of it," she said.

She sat down again in the lamplight and put the baby to her breast.

"A dream that's over and done with in the morning," she said again.

"It's been a hard year for the both of you," sighed Upper Archie. "You were young at the beginning of it . . ."

Debbie looked down at the child in her arms.

"A good year!" she protested quietly. "And a good year ahead, I'm thinking."

The cowbell tinkled from the pasture. The quiet of the spring night filled the kitchen.

"It'll be a good year," agreed Gid confidently. "Now the weir's built, we can be starting soon to build the camp again, Peter and I. We'll have a place, Debbie, for you and the little one to come."

"It'll be a dreary sight on the island with the mountain bare," Debbie said, with a sudden note of sadness in her voice.

"It'll not be long till the mountain's all ablaze with fireweed," Gid reminded her.

"Fireweed," repeated Debbie thoughtfully. "Fireweed between the charred stumps. . . . That'll be a fine sight, Gid."

They sat silent for a little time, Upper Archie smoking quietly, Gid contentedly watching Debbie with the baby at her breast.

She crooned a little song as she rocked him at last to sleep. When she had laid him in the cradle she sat down again to sew, with the glow of the lamp-light on her coiled gold braids.

The fog had come in like a warm blanket over the land, and the foghorn, hushed by distance, sounded steadily.

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